

Official Report of the  
One Hundred Seventy-seventh  
Annual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center  
and the Tabernacle  
Salt Lake City, Utah

**March 31 and April 1, 2007**



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# Report of the 177th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 177th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, March 31, 2007, at 10:00 a.m.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, March 31 and April 1, 2007. The Saturday afternoon session was held in the Tabernacle on Temple Square, during which the newly renovated building was rededicated. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, March 31, at 6:00 p.m.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference. He conducted the Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning sessions. President Thomas S. Monson conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday afternoon sessions.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, video recordings of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

## General Authorities

*First Presidency:* Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, Henry B. Eyring, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and David A. Bednar

*Presidency of the Seventy:* Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, Charles Didier, Merrill J. Bateman, Robert C. Oaks, Neil L. Andersen, and Ronald A. Rasband

*First Quorum of the Seventy:* Carlos H. Amado, David S. Baxter, Shayne M. Bowen, Monte J. Brough, Sheldon F. Child, L. Whitney Clayton, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Benjamín De Hoyos, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, David F. Evans, Enrique R. Falabella, Christoffel Golden Jr., Walter F. González, C. Scott Grow, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, Keith K. Hilbig, Richard G. Hinckley, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Daniel L. Johnson, Kenneth Johnson, Paul V. Johnson, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Paul E. Koelliker, Erich W. Kopischke, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Marcus B. Nash, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, Anthony D. Perkins, Paul B. Pieper, Bruce D. Porter, Carl B. Pratt, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Steven E. Snow, Ulisses Soares, Michael J. Teh, Octaviano Tenorio, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, Claudio D. Zivic, and W. Craig Zwick

*Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Merwyn B. Arnold, Douglas L. Callister, Craig A. Cardon, Craig C. Christensen, Shirley D. Christensen, Don R. Clarke, James M. Dunn, Keith R. Edwards, Stanley G. Ellis, Daryl H. Garn, D. Rex Gerratt, Larry W. Gibbons, Spencer V. Jones, Won Yong Ko, Gerald N. Lund, Clate W. Mask Jr., Robert F. Orton, William W. Parmley, Wolfgang H. Paul, Wayne S. Peterson, R. Conrad Schultz, W. Douglas Shumway, Lowell M. Snow, Robert R. Steuer, Paul K. Sybrowsky, William R. Walker, Robert S. Wood, and H. Ross Workman

*Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 177th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, March 31, 2007. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist. To begin this session, the choir sang “Glory to God on High.” President Monson then made the following remarks.

### President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you to the first general session of the 177th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand in the Conference Center and at the overflow location in the Assembly Hall and likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young

Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies in attendance at this conference.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and satellite and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world. We are also pleased to make available these proceedings via the Internet.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing “Glory to God on High” and will now favor us with “Sweet Hour of Prayer.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Robert F. Orton of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Sweet Hour of Prayer.”

Elder Robert F. Orton offered the invocation.

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## The Sustaining of Church Officers

### President Thomas S. Monson

President Hinckley has asked that I now present the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for a sustaining vote. Brother Robert W. Cantwell, managing director of Church Auditing, will then read the Church Auditing Department Report. He will be followed by Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, who will present the Statistical Report of the Church for the year 2006. Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of

the Twelve Apostles will then address us, and following his remarks the choir will sing “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel.”

As I now present to you the authorities, may we all participate not only with our uplifted hand but with our pledged heart.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presi-

dency. Those in favor may manifest it by the uplifted hand. Those opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, Henry B. Eyring, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and David A. Bednar. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release the following as Area Seventies effective May 1, 2007:

D. Allen Andersen, C. Elmer Black Jr., Ildefonso de Castro Deus, Oscar W. Chavez, Hector A. Dávalos, Carlos R. Fernandez, Carlos J. García, John R. Gibson, José L. Gonzalez, Paulo Grahl, Beaver T. Ho Ching, Emmanuel A. Kissi, Erich W. Kopischke, G. Steven Laney, Barry Lee, James B. McDonald, Gerald A. Mead, Jorge Mendez, Rodrigo Myrrha, Carlos A. Perez, Richard G. Peterson, Eric B. Shumway, Joseph W. Sitati, A. Kim Smith, W. Blake Sonne, Gary M. Stewart, Michael J. Teh, Robert B. White, and John W. Yardley. All who wish to join us in expressing appreciation, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain as new members of the First Quorum of the Seventy Enrique R. Falabella, Erich W. Kopischke, Michael J. Teh, Octaviano Tenorio, and Claudio D. Zivic. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as new Area Seventies:

Richard K. Ahadjie, Rubén V. Alliaud, Climato C. A. Almeida, Sergio M.

Anaya, Wilford W. Andersen, Fernando J. D. Araújo, Nolan D. Archibald, Carlos L. Astorga, Hector Avila, Marvin T. Brinkerhoff, M. Anthony Burns, David Cabrera, Rafael E. Castro, Gerald J. Caussé, Robert E. Chambers, Yoon Hwan Choi, Kim B. Clark, David L. Cook, Nelson D. Cordova, Gary L. Crittenden, Stephen L. Fluckiger, Jovencio A. Guanzon, Mario E. Guerra, Luis S. Hernandez, Garith C. Hill, Frederick C. Ihesiene, David H. Ingram, Tetsuji Ishii, Kapumba T. Kola, Richard K. Melchin, R. Bruce Merrell, Peter F. Meurs, Benson E. Misalucha, Enrique J. Montoya, K. Brett Nattress, Russell T. Osguthorpe, Gamaliel Osorno, Patrick H. Price, Paulo R. Puerta, Rubén L. Spitale, Natã C. Tobias, Frank V. Trythall, Terence M. Vinson, Taniela B. Wakolo, Richard W. Wheeler, and Scott D. Whiting. All in favor, please manifest it. Opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of thanks and sincere appreciation Bonnie Rae Dansie Parkin, Kathleen Hurst Hughes, and Anne Clark Pingree as the Relief Society general presidency. We also release all members of the Relief Society general board. It is also proposed that we release Julie Bangerter Beck and Elaine Schwartz Dalton as counselors in the Young Women general presidency. All who wish to join us in expressing appreciation for their excellent service and devotion, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Julie Bangerter Beck as the new general president of the Relief Society, with Silvia Henriquez Allred as first counselor and Barbara Thompson as second counselor. Those in favor may manifest it. Opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It is also proposed that we sustain Elaine Schwartz Dalton as the first counselor in the Young Women general presidency and Mary Nielsen Cook as the second counselor in the Young Women general presidency. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative, President

Hinckley. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your faith and prayers.

We shall now ask the newly called General Authorities, Relief Society general presidency, and counselors in the Young Women general presidency to take their places on the stand.

## Church Auditing Department Report for 2006

### Robert W. Cantwell

To the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Dear Brethren: As prescribed by revelation in section 120 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes authorizes the expenditure of Church funds. This council is composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric. This council approves budgets for Church departments and operations. After receiving the council's authorization, Church departments are to expend funds consistent with approved budgets and in accordance with Church policies and procedures.

The Church Auditing Department has been granted access to all records and systems necessary to evaluate the adequacy of controls over receipts of funds, expendi-

tures, and safeguarding of Church assets. The Church Auditing Department is independent of all other Church departments and operations, and the staff consists of certified public accountants, certified internal auditors, certified information systems auditors, and other credentialed professionals.

Based upon audits performed, the Church Auditing Department is of the opinion that, in all material respects, contributions received, expenditures made, and assets of the Church for the year 2006 have been recorded and administered in accordance with appropriate accounting practices, approved budgets, and Church policies and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

Church Auditing Department  
Robert W. Cantwell  
Managing Director

## Church Statistical Report for 2006

### F. Michael Watson

Brothers and sisters, the First Presidency has issued the following report concerning the growth and activity of the Church as of December 31, 2006:

#### Number of Church units

Stakes . . . . . 2,745  
Missions . . . . . 344

Districts . . . . . 630  
Wards and branches . . . . . 27,475

#### Church membership

Total membership . . . . . 12,868,606  
Increase in children of record  
during 2006 . . . . . 94,006  
Converts baptized during 2006 . . 272,845



**Missionaries**

Full-time missionaries . . . . . 53,164

**Temples**

Temples dedicated during 2006 . . . . . 2  
(Sacramento California and Helsinki  
Finland)

Temples rededicated during 2006 . . . . . 2  
(Santiago Chile and Papeete Tahiti)

Temples in operation . . . . . 124

**Prominent Church members who have passed away since last April**

*Elder Devere Harris*, former member of the Seventy; *Elder Spencer H. Osborn*, former member of the Seventy; *Sister Elisa Young Rogers Wirthlin*, wife of Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; *Sister Norma Berntson Ashton*, widow of Elder Marvin J. Ashton, former member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; *Sister Dorothy Porter Holt*, former counselor in the Young Women general presidency.

**Elder Richard G. Scott**

This conference began with a profoundly moving presentation of the classic hymn “Sweet Hour of Prayer” by the magnificent Mormon Tabernacle Choir. The familiar lyrics remind us that prayer is the source of comfort, relief, and protection, willingly granted by our loving, compassionate Heavenly Father.

**The gift of prayer**

Prayer is a supernal gift of our Father in Heaven to every soul. Think of it: the absolute Supreme Being, the most all-knowing, all-seeing, all-powerful personage, encourages you and me, as insignificant as we are, to converse with Him as our Father. Actually, because He knows how desperately we need His guidance, He commands, “Thou shalt pray vocally as well as in thy heart; yea, before the world as well as in secret, in public as well as in private.”<sup>1</sup>

It matters not our circumstance, be we humble or arrogant, poor or rich, free or enslaved, learned or ignorant, loved or forsaken, we can address Him. We need no appointment. Our supplication can be brief or can occupy all the time needed. It can be an extended expression of love and gratitude or an urgent plea for help. He

has created numberless cosmos and populated them with worlds, yet you and I can talk with Him personally, and He will ever answer.

**How should you pray?**

We pray to our Heavenly Father in the sacred name of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Prayer is most effective when we strive to be clean and obedient, with worthy motives, and are willing to do what He asks. Humble, trusting prayer brings direction and peace.

Don’t worry about your clumsily expressed feelings. Just talk to your compassionate, understanding Father. You are His precious child whom He loves perfectly and wants to help. As you pray, recognize that Father in Heaven is near and He is listening.

A key to improved prayer is to learn to ask the right questions. Consider changing from asking for the things you want to honestly seeking what He wants for you. Then as you learn His will, pray that you will be led to have the strength to fulfill it.

Should you ever feel distanced from our Father, it could be for many reasons. Whatever the cause, as you continue to plead for help, He will guide you to do

that which will restore your confidence that He is near. Pray even when you have no desire to pray. Sometimes, like a child, you may misbehave and feel you cannot approach your Father with a problem. That is when you most need to pray. Never feel you are too unworthy to pray.

I wonder if we can ever really fathom the immense power of prayer until we encounter an overpowering, urgent problem and realize that we are powerless to resolve it. Then we will turn to our Father in humble recognition of our total dependence on Him. It helps to find a secluded place where our feelings can be vocally expressed as long and as intensely as necessary.

I have done that. Once I had an experience that caused me immense anxiety. It had nothing to do with disobedience or transgression but with a vitally important human relationship. For some time I poured my heart out in urgent prayer. Yet try as I might, I could find no solution, no settling of the powerful stirring within me. I pled for help from that Eternal Father I have come to know and trust completely. I could see no path that would provide the calm that is my blessing generally to enjoy. Sleep overcame me. When I awoke, I was totally at peace. Again I knelt in solemn prayer and asked, "Lord, how is it done?" In my heart, I knew the answer was His love and His concern for me. Such is the power of sincere prayer to a compassionate Father.

### **President Hinckley's example**

I have learned much about prayer by listening to President Hinckley offer supplications in our meetings. You can also learn from him by carefully studying the exceptional public prayer he offered at the conclusion of the October 2001 conference for Father's children throughout the world. He prayed from his heart, not from a prepared manuscript. (For convenience, that prayer is reproduced at the end of this message.<sup>2</sup>)

Study that prayer, and you will find that there are no vain repetitions, no posturing to impress others, as sometimes occurs. He combines simple words eloquently. He prays as a humble, trusting son who knows well his beloved Father in Heaven. He confides in the certainty that His answer will come when most needed. Each prayer is tailored to its purpose, with a clear statement of what needs resolution, as well as ample expression of gratitude for specific, recognized blessings. His spontaneous prayers are like crafted gems, a silent witness to the fundamental place prayer has occupied in his life for many, many years.

### **How are prayers answered?**

Some truths regarding how prayers are answered may help you.

Often when we pray for help with a significant matter, Heavenly Father will give us gentle promptings that require us to think, exercise faith, work, at times struggle, then act. It is a step-by-step process that enables us to discern inspired answers.

I have discovered that what sometimes seems an impenetrable barrier to communication is a giant step to be taken in trust. Seldom will you receive a complete response all at once. It will come a piece at a time, in packets, so that you will grow in capacity. As each piece is followed in faith, you will be led to other portions until you have the whole answer. That pattern requires you to exercise faith in our Father's capacity to respond. While sometimes it's very hard, it results in significant personal growth.

He will always hear your prayers and will invariably answer them. However, His answers will seldom come while you are on your knees praying, even when you may plead for an immediate response. Rather, He will prompt you in quiet moments when the Spirit can most effectively touch your mind and heart. Hence, you should find periods of quiet time to recog-

nize when you are being instructed and strengthened. His pattern causes you to grow.

President David O. McKay testified, "It is true that the answers to our prayers may not always come as direct and at the time, nor in the manner, we anticipate; but they do come, and at a time and in a manner best for the interests of him who offers the supplication."<sup>3</sup> Be thankful that sometimes God lets you struggle for a long time before that answer comes. Your character will grow; your faith will increase. There is a relationship between those two: the greater your faith, the stronger your character; and increased character enhances your ability to exercise even greater faith.

On occasion, the Lord will give you an answer before you ask. This can occur when you are unaware of a danger or may be doing the wrong thing, mistakenly trusting that it is correct.

It is so hard when sincere prayer about something you desire very much is not answered the way you want. It is difficult to understand why your exercise of deep and sincere faith from an obedient life does not grant the desired result. The Savior taught, "Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name it shall be given unto you, *that is expedient for you*."<sup>4</sup> At times it is difficult to recognize what is *best* or *expedient* for you over time. Your life will be easier when you accept that what God does in your life is for your *eternal* good.

### **"In your mind and in your heart"**

You are asked to *look* for an answer to your prayers.<sup>5</sup> Obey the Master's counsel to "study it out in your mind."<sup>6</sup> Often you will think of a solution; as you seek confirmation that your answer is right, help will come. It may be through your prayers, or as an impression of the Holy Ghost, and at times by the intervention of others.<sup>7</sup>

This guidance about prayer given to Oliver Cowdery can also aid you: "Behold,

... you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me.

"... You must study it out in your mind; then ... ask me if it be right, and if it is right ... your bosom shall burn ... ; therefore, you shall *feel* that it is right."<sup>8</sup>

Then the answer comes as a *feeling* with an accompanying conviction. The Savior defines two separate ways: "I will tell you in your *mind* and in your *heart*, by the Holy Ghost."<sup>9</sup>

Answers to the mind and heart are messages from the Holy Ghost to our spirits. For me, response to the mind is very specific, like dictated words, while response to the heart is generalized, like a feeling to pray more.<sup>10</sup>

Then the Lord clarifies, "But if [what you propose] be not right you ... shall have a stupor of thought."<sup>11</sup> That, for me, is an unsettling, discomfoting feeling.

Oliver Cowdery was taught another way in which positive answers come: "Did I not speak *peace* to your mind concerning the matter?"<sup>12</sup> The feeling of peace is the most common confirming witness that I personally experience. When I have been very concerned about an important matter, struggling to resolve it without success, I continued those efforts in faith. Later, an all-pervading peace has come, settling my concerns, as He has promised.

### **Three ways God replies**

Some misunderstandings about prayer can be clarified by realizing that the scriptures define principles for effective prayer, but they do not assure *when* a response will be given. Actually, He will reply in one of *three* ways. First, you can feel the peace, comfort, and assurance that confirm that your decision is right. Or second, you can sense that unsettled feeling, the stupor of thought, indicating that your choice is wrong. Or third—and this is the difficult one—you can feel no response.

What do you do when you have prepared carefully, have prayed fervently, waited a reasonable time for a response, and still do not feel an answer? You may want to express thanks when that occurs, for it is an evidence of His trust. When you are living worthily and your choice is consistent with the Savior's teachings and you need to act, proceed with trust. As you are sensitive to the promptings of the Spirit, one of two things will certainly occur at the appropriate time: either the stupor of thought will come, indicating an improper choice, or the peace or the burning in the bosom will be felt, confirming that your choice was correct. When you are living righteously and are acting with trust, God will not let you proceed too far without a warning impression if you have made the wrong decision.

### Gratitude for the gift of prayer

An important aspect of prayer is gratitude. Jesus declared, "And in nothing doth man offend God . . . save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments."<sup>13</sup> When we contemplate the incomparable gift of prayer and the limitless blessings that flow from it, honest appreciation fills our mind and heart to overflowing with thanksgiving. Should we not, therefore, continually and profoundly express to our beloved Father, as well as we are able, our unbounded gratitude for the supernal gift of prayer and for His answers that meet our needs while motivating us to grow?

I testify our Father will always answer your prayers in the way and in the time that will be for your best eternal good. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 19:28.
2. "O God, our Eternal Father, Thou great Judge of the Nations, Thou who art the governor of the universe, Thou who art our Father and our God, whose children we are, we look to Thee in faith in this dark and solemn time. Please, dear Father, bless us with faith. Bless us with love. Bless us with charity in our hearts. Bless us with a spirit of perseverance to root out the terrible evils that are in this world. Give protection and guidance to those who are engaged actively in carrying forth the things of battle. Bless them; preserve their lives; save them from harm and evil. Hear the prayers of their loved ones for their safety. We pray for the great democracies of the earth which Thou hast overseen in creating their governments, where peace and liberty and democratic processes obtain.
3. "O Father, look with mercy upon this, our own nation, and its friends in this time of need. Spare us and help us to walk with faith ever in Thee and ever in Thy Beloved Son, on whose mercy we count and to whom we look as our Savior and our Lord. Bless the cause of peace and bring it quickly to us again, we humbly plead with Thee, asking that Thou wilt forgive our arrogance, pass by our sins, be kind and gracious to us, and cause our hearts to turn with love toward Thee. We humbly pray in the name of Him who loves us all, even the Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and our Savior, amen" (in Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 112; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 90).
3. In Conference Report, Apr. 1969, 153.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 88:64; italics added; see also vv. 63, 65.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 6:23, 36; 8:2–3, 10; 9:9.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 9:8.
7. See Spencer W. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 252.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 9:7–8; italics added.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 8:2; italics added.
10. See Enos 1:3–5, 9–10.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 9:9.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 6:23; italics added.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 59:21.

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The choir sang “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel.”

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### **President Monson**

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elders Jay E. Jensen and John B. Dickson

of the Seventy. Following their remarks, the choir and congregation will sing “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.” Elders Jeffrey R. Holland and David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve will then address us, after which the choir will sing “Search, Ponder, and Pray.”

## **Elder Jay E. Jensen**

### **The influence of hymns**

This magnificent choir gives inspiring sermons. In fact, “some of the greatest sermons are preached by the singing of hymns.”<sup>1</sup> My testimony and conversion to the restored gospel were strongly influenced by singing the hymns of Zion as a young boy. I grew up in the small town of Mapleton, Utah, and attended meetings in what is known today as the “old white church.” My 95-year-old mother still lives in Mapleton. When I visit her, I drive past the old white church, and a flood of sweet memories fills my mind. Among them is the converting power of the hymns we sang in priesthood, Sunday School, and sacrament meetings. My experiences were similar to that of President Hinckley when, as a deacon, he attended a stake priesthood meeting with his father. They sang “Praise to the Man.”<sup>2</sup> Later he would say, “I had an impression that has never left that Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet of God.”<sup>3</sup> I believe that many of our Saints experience this again and again. Hymns play an essential role in spirituality, revelation, and conversion.

### **Hymns invite the Spirit**

Hymns are “an essential part of our church meetings. [They] invite the Spirit of the Lord.”<sup>4</sup> They often do this quicker than anything else we may do. President J. Reuben Clark Jr. said, “We get nearer

to the Lord through music than perhaps through any other thing except prayer.”<sup>5</sup>

Two missionaries teaching an older couple in their home in Peru were interrupted by the arrival of the couple’s son, his wife, and three children. The elders explained who they were and what they were doing. The son was suspicious of the missionaries, resulting in an awkward moment. The junior companion prayed silently, “Heavenly Father, what do we do?” The impression came to sing. They sang “I Am a Child of God.”<sup>6</sup> The Spirit touched the hearts of this family of five. Instead of two converts, all seven became members, influenced initially by a hymn.

Music in Church meetings and classes should facilitate a spirit of worship, revelation, and testimony. For sacrament meetings, the bishopric or branch presidency is responsible to select or approve music. They ensure that the music, the words, and the musical instruments are sacred and dignified and will promote worship and revelation. Music becomes a performance when it brings attention to itself. Years ago, I was responsible for the music in a meeting where a special musical number was a performance. It was a disappointment. The spirit of worship was diminished.

### **Hymns invite revelation**

Hymns “create a feeling of reverence.”<sup>7</sup> The words *reverence* and *revelation*

are like twins who like each other's company. When the Seventy and Presiding Bishopric are invited to meetings with the First Presidency and the Twelve, we are reminded to arrive early and reverently listen to prelude music. Doing so invites revelation and prepares us for the meeting.

President Packer taught that a member who softly plays "prelude music from the hymnbook tempers our feelings and causes us to go over in our minds the lyrics which teach the peaceable things of the kingdom. If we will listen, they are teaching the gospel, for the hymns of the Restoration are, in fact, a course in doctrine!"<sup>8</sup>

### **Hymns invite conversion**

The hymns of the Restoration carry with them the spirit of conversion. They came as a result of sacrifice. Hymns like "Praise to the Man,"<sup>9</sup> "Come, Come, Ye Saints,"<sup>10</sup> "Ye Elders of Israel,"<sup>11</sup> "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,"<sup>12</sup> "Redeemer of Israel,"<sup>13</sup> and many others reinforce the great truths of the Restoration—such as the divinity of the Father and the Son, the plan of redemption, revelation, latter-day scriptures, the gathering of Israel, the holy priesthood, and ordinances and covenants. These nourishing hymns create an atmosphere that invites the Spirit, which leads us to conversion.

How incomplete and empty sacrament meetings would be without hymns of worship.<sup>14</sup> Sacred among all hymns are those that capture the sacrifice and the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ and His infinite Atonement.

My earliest memories of the healing power of the Savior are associated with sacrament hymns. This sentence is real to me: "I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me, confused at the grace that so fully he proffers me."<sup>15</sup>

My understanding of the doctrines of the Atonement is connected to the hymns. This verse is illustrative:

How great, how glorious, how complete  
Redemption's grand design,  
Where justice, love, and mercy meet  
In harmony divine!<sup>16</sup>

### **Teaching children hymns begins at home**

Singing hymns and listening to appropriate music begin at home. The First Presidency has reminded us:

"Latter-day Saints should fill their homes with the sound of worthy music.

"... We hope the hymnbook will take a prominent place among the scriptures and other religious books in our homes. The hymns can bring families a spirit of beauty and peace and can inspire love and unity among family members.

"Teach your children to love the hymns. Sing them on the Sabbath, in [family] home evening, during scripture study, at prayer time. Sing as you work, as you play, and as you travel together. Sing hymns as lullabies to build faith and testimony in your young ones."<sup>17</sup>

### **Worship more meaningfully through hymns**

Important lessons I have learned and seek to apply about hymns are:

1. Strive to be more punctual to meetings, sit quietly and listen to the prelude music, and experience reverence and revelation.

2. Exit meetings more reverently, allowing the postlude music to extend the spirit of the meeting.

3. Sing the hymns. I see some who have access to hymnals but do not sing.

4. Choose hymns appropriate to the meeting and messages.

5. Use hymns to introduce or to emphasize scriptures and gospel truths in lessons and classes.

6. Listen to the hymns more frequently in our homes, inviting the Spirit to prevail.

I pray that we may eliminate any inappropriate music from our lives and follow the counsel of the First Presidency: “Brothers and sisters, let us use the hymns to invite the Spirit of the Lord into our congregations, our homes, and our personal lives. Let us memorize and ponder them, recite and sing them, and partake of their spiritual nourishment. Know that the song of the righteous is a prayer unto our Father in Heaven, ‘and it shall be answered with a blessing upon [your] heads.’”<sup>18</sup> Of these truths I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. *Hymns*, ix.
2. *Hymns*, no. 27.
3. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 399.
4. *Hymns*, ix.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1936, 111.
6. *Hymns*, no. 301.
7. *Hymns*, ix.
8. In Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 29; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 22.
9. *Hymns*, no. 27.
10. *Hymns*, no. 30.
11. *Hymns*, no. 319.
12. *Hymns*, no. 19.
13. *Hymns*, no. 6.
14. Just as hymns are essential to Sabbath and family worship, so are hymns and carols to Christmas (see *Hymns*, nos. 201–14).
15. “I Stand All Amazed,” *Hymns*, no. 193.
16. “How Great the Wisdom and the Love,” *Hymns*, no. 195.
17. *Hymns*, x.
18. *Hymns*, x.

## Elder John B. Dickson

### Message to youth: Commit now

Good morning, brothers and sisters. I would like to address the youth of the Church this morning as Sister Dickson and I would counsel our own family.

We know that you are an exceptionally bright generation of youth that will soon take our place as leaders in the home, the workplace, the community, and the Church.

Your Heavenly Father loves each of you and has sent you to earth with a purpose. He has revealed a plan of happiness that, if followed, will ultimately bring you home to His presence, having triumphed over the trials and challenges of this world. Committing yourself now to live by the pattern the Lord has set will give you great strength in the proper use of your moral agency. The sincere commitments you make to yourself and to the Lord will be vital. We learn from the book of Psalms to “commit thy way unto the Lord; . . . and he shall bring it to pass” (Psalm 37:5).

You have come into this world at a time that has been anticipated from the beginning—a time prior to the Second Coming of the Lord, in which, on one hand, the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored in its fulness and, on the other, there is great turmoil, confusion, and wickedness. The proving ground that you were born into is wonderful, affording great opportunities, but at the same time there is danger in abundance, even danger to one’s very soul. Now is the time to commit yourself to the Lord as to what you will become during this mortal probation. Along with your parents, living prophets, and the scriptures, the Holy Ghost will help you distinguish between right and wrong so correct decisions can be made.

Hopefully you will prayerfully study the pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth* and review and carry with you, in your wallet or purse, the abbreviated copy of the pamphlet. Great happiness will come to you in this life and eternally if you decide now to live after the pattern that is set forth in its pages.

## **Commitment to live the Word of Wisdom**

Let me help you understand how this pattern of making early commitments can help you by relating the experience of one Church leader. As a young man he decided that he would always keep the Word of Wisdom and never use alcohol or tobacco. He does not remember what prompted him to make that important commitment at the time, but a crucial victory was won in his heart, and on his knees he made a commitment with the Lord to always keep that commandment. Over the years there were invitations to use these substances, but he learned that “No, thank you” was a good answer. There was no personal battle over the Word of Wisdom, because years before he had made a commitment in his heart, and he had sincerely made a commitment to the Lord to obey that law.

As you seek to receive Heavenly Father’s blessings regarding the Word of Wisdom, include a commitment to never touch the illegal drugs that are prevalent in today’s society. The adversary will have very little power to tempt you with things that you have never touched.

## **“Beware concerning yourselves”**

As members of the Church we have been baptized and have made a covenant to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ and keep God’s commandments. If mistakes are made, the gospel allows us to sincerely repent and be forgiven. Your commitment can begin from where you are presently, whether young or old, including repenting and forsaking sin where mistakes have already been made.

The Lord promises great, eternal blessings to His righteous, repentant children, but knowing there is great danger here in this life, He has commanded us, saying, “Beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life” (D&C 84:43). Because He loves us and wants us back, this commandment to

“beware concerning [ourselves]” prompts us to be careful concerning everything about us—the type of social settings we enter, what we see and read, the media and entertainment we choose, the music we listen to, and more.

Setting a pattern of early commitment is very important. For example, to receive the blessings promised to those who pay tithes and offerings, you should commit now to pay tithing on all earnings. Paying tithing helps us become less selfish and more like our Heavenly Father, who wants to share all that He has with His righteous children. Making that decision will be extremely important. It is interesting to note that, like tithing, every commandment is designed for your eternal happiness and to help you become more like your Father in Heaven. Decide now to be like Nephi of old, who was absolutely determined to “go and do the things which the Lord [had] commanded” (1 Nephi 3:7).

## **Commit to standards**

Let us now consider other commitments that will bless your lives. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if, in spite of what others at school might be doing, from this moment forward you would be known for your absolute integrity and clean language? Decide now that you will never cheat; that your language will be pure; that as long as you live, vulgar words or jokes will never come from your lips. These are commitments you can make in the quiet of your room and upon your knees. Success will come to you as you earnestly, prayerfully, and humbly approach the Lord. The scriptures teach, “Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers” (D&C 112:10).

You would also want to make commitments regarding modesty of dress and how to act while dating. Keeping the Lord’s standards is always easier when you have already determined how you will



act when faced with decisions in the presence of a date, friends, or peers. Some individuals may not understand your standards as you follow righteous principles and keep your commitments, but they will truly respect and admire you and wish that they were more like you.

Other standards to ponder and commit to are absolute moral cleanliness and sexual purity, Sabbath observance, preparation for missions and the temple, and a determination to always partake of the sacrament worthily.

President Hinckley loves the youth and has constantly encouraged you to follow the standards the Lord has set. Follow-

ing a living prophet's encouragement and counsel will lead you on a path to eternal or everlasting happiness.

As you commit now to do the will of the Lord, He will help and strengthen you. Your faith, trust, and desire to follow Him will be your greatest key to success. I know our Heavenly Father loves each of you and that He truly sent His Only Begotten Son to help you and that you can gloriously succeed as you sincerely commit to follow Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir and congregation sang  
 “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

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## Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

### The power of words

The Prophet Joseph Smith deepened our understanding of the power of speech when he taught, “*It is by words . . . [that] every being works when he works by faith.*” God said, ‘Let there be light: and there was light.’ Joshua spake, and the great lights which God had created stood still. Elijah commanded, and the heavens were stayed for the space of three years and six months, so that it did not rain. . . . All this was done by faith. . . . *Faith, then, works by words; and with [words] its mightiest works have been, and will be, performed.*”<sup>1</sup> Like all gifts “which cometh from above,” words are “sacred, and must be spoken with care, and by constraint of the Spirit.”<sup>2</sup>

It is with this realization of the power and sanctity of words that I wish to caution us, if caution is needed, regarding how we speak to each other and how we speak of ourselves.

There is a line from the Apocrypha which puts the seriousness of this issue better than I can. It reads, “The stroke of the whip maketh marks in the flesh: but the stroke of the tongue breaketh the bones.”<sup>3</sup> With that stinging image in mind,

I was particularly impressed to read in the book of James that there was a way I could be “a perfect man.”

### “Offend not in word”

Said James: “For in many things we offend all. *[But] if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man,* and able also to bridle the whole body.”

Continuing the imagery of the bridle, he writes: “Behold, we put bits in the horses’ mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

“Behold also . . . ships, which though they be . . . great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm.”

Then James makes his point: “The tongue is [also] a little member. . . . *[But] behold, how great a [forest (Greek)] a little fire [can burn]!*

“ . . . So is the tongue [a fire] among our members, . . . it defileth the whole body, . . . it is set on fire of hell.

“For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea . . . hath been tamed of mankind:

“But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

“Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

“Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.”<sup>4</sup>

Well, *that* is pretty straightforward! Obviously James doesn’t mean our tongues are *always* iniquitous, nor that *everything* we say is “full of deadly poison.” But he clearly means that at least some things we say can be destructive, even venomous—and that is a chilling indictment for a Latter-day Saint! The voice that bears profound testimony, utters fervent prayer, and sings the hymns of Zion *can be* the same voice that berates and criticizes, embarrasses and demeans, inflicts pain and destroys the spirit of oneself and of others in the process. “Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing,” James grieves. “My brethren [and sisters], these things ought not so to be.”

Is this something we could all work on just a little? Is this an area in which we could each try to be a little more like a “perfect” man or woman?

### Care in speaking to family members

Husbands, you have been entrusted with the most sacred gift God can give you—a wife, a daughter of God, the mother of your children, who has voluntarily given herself to you for love and joyful companionship. Think of the kind things you said when you were courting, think of the blessings you have given with hands placed lovingly upon her head, think of yourself and of her as the god and goddess you both inherently are, and then reflect on other moments characterized by cold, caustic, unbridled words. Given the damage that can be done with our tongues, little wonder the Savior said, “Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of

the mouth, this defileth a man.”<sup>5</sup> A husband who would never dream of striking his wife physically can break, if not her bones, then certainly her heart by the brutality of thoughtless or unkind speech. Physical abuse is uniformly and unequivocally condemned in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. If it is possible to be more condemning than that, we speak even more vigorously against all forms of sexual abuse. Today, I speak against verbal and emotional abuse of anyone against anyone, but especially of husbands against wives. Brethren, these things ought not to be.

In that same spirit we speak to the sisters as well, for the sin of verbal abuse knows no gender. Wives, what of the unbridled tongue in *your* mouth, of the power for good or ill in *your* words? How is it that such a lovely voice which by divine nature is so angelic, so close to the veil, so instinctively gentle and inherently kind could ever in a turn be so shrill, so biting, so acrid and untamed? A woman’s words can be more piercing than any dagger ever forged, and they can drive the people they love to retreat beyond a barrier more distant than anyone in the beginning of that exchange could ever have imagined. Sisters, there is no place in that magnificent spirit of yours for acerbic or abrasive expression of any kind, including gossip or backbiting or catty remarks. Let it never be said of our home or our ward or our neighborhood that “the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity . . . [burning] among our members.”<sup>6</sup>

May I expand this counsel to make it a full family matter. We must be so careful in speaking to a child. What we say or don’t say, how we say it and when is so very, very important in shaping a child’s view of himself or herself. But it is even more important in shaping that child’s faith in us and their faith in God. Be constructive in your comments to a child—always. Never tell them, even in whimsy, that they are fat or dumb or lazy or homely. You would never do that maliciously, but

they remember and may struggle for years trying to forget—and to forgive. And try not to compare your children, even if you think you are skillful at it. You may say most positively that “Susan is pretty and Sandra is bright,” but all Susan will remember is that she isn’t bright and Sandra that she isn’t pretty. Praise each child individually for what that child is, and help him or her escape our culture’s obsession with comparing, competing, and never feeling we are “enough.”

### **Speak encouragingly**

In all of this, I suppose it goes without saying that negative speaking so often flows from negative thinking, including negative thinking about ourselves. We see our own faults, we speak—or at least think—critically of ourselves, and before long that is how we see everyone and everything. No sunshine, no roses, no promise of hope or happiness. Before long we and everybody around us are miserable.

I love what Elder Orson F. Whitney once said: “The spirit of the gospel is optimistic; it trusts in God and looks on the bright side of things. The opposite or pessimistic spirit drags men down and away from God, looks on the dark side, murmurs, complains, and is slow to yield obedience.”<sup>7</sup> We should honor the Savior’s declaration to “be of good cheer.”<sup>8</sup> (Indeed, it seems to me we may be more guilty of breaking that commandment than almost any other!) Speak hopefully. Speak encouragingly, including about yourself. Try not to complain and moan incessantly. As someone once said, “Even in the golden age of civilization, someone undoubtedly grumbled that everything looked too yellow.”

I have often thought that Nephi’s being bound with cords and beaten by rods must have been more tolerable to him than listening to Laman and Lemuel’s constant murmuring.<sup>9</sup> Surely he must have said at least once, “Hit me one more time. I can still hear you.” Yes, life has its

problems, and yes, there are negative things to face, but please accept one of Elder Holland’s maxims for living—no misfortune is so bad that whining about it won’t make it worse.

Paul put it candidly but very hopefully. He said to all of us:

“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but [only] that which is good . . . [and] edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God. . . .

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you. . . .

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Speaking with a new tongue**

In his deeply moving final testimony, Nephi calls us to “follow the Son [of God], with full purpose of heart,” promising that “after ye have . . . received the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost, [ye] can speak with a new tongue, yea, even with the tongue of angels. . . . And . . . how could ye speak with the tongue of angels save it were by the Holy Ghost? Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ.”<sup>11</sup> Indeed, Christ was and is “the Word,” according to John the Beloved,<sup>12</sup> full of grace and truth, full of mercy and compassion.

So, brothers and sisters, in this long eternal quest to be more like our Savior, may we try to be “perfect” men and women in at least this one way now—by offending not in word, or more positively put, by speaking with a new tongue, the tongue of angels. Our words, like our deeds, should be filled with faith and hope and charity, the three great Christian imperatives so desperately needed in the world today. With such words, spoken under the influence of the Spirit, tears can be dried, hearts can be healed, lives can be elevated, hope can return, confidence can prevail. I pray

that my words, even on this challenging subject, will be encouraging to you, not discouraging, that you can hear in my voice that I love you, because I do. More importantly, please know that your Father in Heaven loves you and so does His Only Begotten Son. When They speak to you—and They will—it will not be in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but it will be with a voice still and small, a voice tender and kind.<sup>13</sup> It will be with the tongue of angels. May we all rejoice in the thought that when we say edifying, encouraging things unto the least of these, our brethren and sisters and little ones, we say it unto God.<sup>14</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 72–73; italics added.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 63:64.
3. Ecclesiasticus 28:17.
4. James 3:2–10; italics added.
5. Matthew 15:11.
6. James 3:6.
7. In Conference Report, Apr. 1917, 43.
8. Matthew 14:27; Mark 6:50; John 16:33.
9. See 1 Nephi 3:28–31; 18:11–15.
10. Ephesians 4:29–32.
11. 2 Nephi 31:13–14; 32:2–3.
12. John 1:1.
13. See 1 Kings 19:11–12.
14. See Matthew 25:40.

## Elder David A. Bednar

### Lessons from canning season

My boyhood home in California was located relatively close to large orchards of apricots, cherries, peaches, pears, and other delicious fruits. We also lived near fields of cucumbers, tomatoes, and a variety of vegetables.

As a boy I always looked forward to canning season. I did not like scrubbing the canning jars or working in our hot kitchen. But I did like working with my mom and dad. And I loved eating my work! I am sure I ate more fruit than ever made it into any of our canning jars.

My memories of time spent in the kitchen with Mom and Dad are stirred every time I see a bottle of home-canned cherries or peaches. The basic lessons I learned about temporal self-reliance and provident living while picking and canning produce have blessed me throughout my life. Interestingly, simple and ordinary experiences often provide the most important learning opportunities we ever have.

As an adult I have reflected upon the things I observed in our kitchen during canning season. This morning I want to

discuss some of the spiritual lessons we can learn from the process by which a cucumber becomes a pickle. I invite the Holy Ghost to be with us as we consider the significance of those lessons for me and for you as we come unto Christ and are spiritually reborn.

### Cucumbers and pickles

A pickle is a cucumber that has been transformed according to a specific recipe and series of steps. The first steps in the process of changing a cucumber into a pickle are *preparing* and *cleaning*. I remember many hours spent on the back porch of my home removing stems from and scrubbing dirt off of the cucumbers we had picked. My mom was very particular about the preparing and cleaning of the cucumbers. She had high standards of cleanliness and always inspected my work to make sure this important task was properly completed.

The next steps in this process of change are *immersing* and *saturating* the cucumbers in salt brine for an extended period of time. To prepare the brine, my

mom always used a recipe she learned from her mother—a recipe with special ingredients and precise procedures. Cucumbers can only become pickles if they are totally and completely immersed in the brine for the prescribed time period. The curing process gradually alters the composition of the cucumber and produces the transparent appearance and distinctive taste of a pickle. An occasional sprinkle of or dip in the brine cannot produce the necessary transformation. Rather, steady, sustained, and complete immersion is required for the desired change to occur.

The final step in the process requires the *sealing* of the cured pickles in jars that have been sterilized and purified. The pickles are packed in canning jars, covered with boiling hot brine, and processed in a boiling-water-bath canner. All impurities must be removed from both the pickles and the bottles so the finished product can be protected and preserved. As this procedure is properly followed, the pickles can be stored and enjoyed for a long period of time.

To summarize, a cucumber becomes a pickle as it is prepared and cleaned, immersed in and saturated with salt brine, and sealed in a sterilized container. This procedure requires time and cannot be hurried, and none of the essential steps can be ignored or avoided.

### **A mighty change**

The Lord's authorized servants repeatedly teach that one of the principal purposes of our mortal existence is to be spiritually changed and transformed through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Alma declared:

"Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters;

"And thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God" (Mosiah 27:25–26).

We are instructed to "come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny [ourselves] of all ungodliness" (Moroni 10:32), to become "new creature[s]" in Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:17), to put off "the natural man" (Mosiah 3:19), and to experience "a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually" (Mosiah 5:2). Please note that the conversion described in these verses is mighty, not minor—a spiritual rebirth and fundamental change of what we feel and desire, what we think and do, and what we are. Indeed, the essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ entails a fundamental and permanent change in our very nature made possible through our reliance upon "the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah" (2 Nephi 2:8). As we choose to follow the Master, we choose to be changed—to be spiritually reborn.

### **Preparing and cleaning**

Just as a cucumber must be prepared and cleaned before it can be changed into a pickle, so you and I can be prepared with "the words of faith and of good doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:6) and initially cleansed through the ordinances and covenants administered by the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood.

"And the lesser priesthood continued, which priesthood holdeth the key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel;

"Which gospel is the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins" (D&C 84:26–27).

And the Lord has established a high standard of cleanliness.

"Wherefore teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the

kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence” (Moses 6:57).

Proper preparing and cleaning are the first basic steps in the process of being born again.

### **Immersing and saturating**

Just as a cucumber is transformed into a pickle as it is immersed in and saturated with salt brine, so you and I are born again as we are absorbed by and in the gospel of Jesus Christ. As we honor and “observe the covenants” (D&C 42:13) into which we have entered, as we “feast upon the words of Christ” (2 Nephi 32:3), as we “pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart” (Moroni 7:48), and as we “serve [God] with all [of our] heart, might, mind and strength” (D&C 4:2), then:

“Because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters” (Mosiah 5:7).

The spiritual rebirth described in this verse typically does not occur quickly or all at once; it is an ongoing process—not a single event. Line upon line and precept upon precept, gradually and almost imperceptibly, our motives, our thoughts, our words, and our deeds become aligned with the will of God. This phase of the transformation process requires time, persistence, and patience.

A cucumber only becomes a pickle through steady, sustained, and complete immersion in salt brine. Significantly, salt is the key ingredient in the recipe. Salt frequently is used in the scriptures as a symbol both of a covenant and of a covenant people. And just as salt is essential in transforming a cucumber into a pickle, so covenants are central to our spiritual rebirth.

We begin the process of being born again through exercising faith in Christ, repenting of our sins, and being baptized by immersion for the remission of sins by one having priesthood authority.

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

And after we come out of the waters of baptism, our souls need to be continuously immersed in and saturated with the truth and the light of the Savior’s gospel. Sporadic and shallow dipping in the doctrine of Christ and partial participation in His restored Church cannot produce the spiritual transformation that enables us to walk in a newness of life. Rather, fidelity to covenants, constancy of commitment, and offering our whole soul unto God are required if we are to receive the blessings of eternity.

“I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved” (Omni 1:26).

Total immersion in and saturation with the Savior’s gospel are essential steps in the process of being born again.

### **Purifying and sealing**

Cured cucumbers are packed into sterilized jars and heat processed in order to remove impurities and to seal the containers from external contaminants. The boiling-water-bath procedure enables the pickles to be both protected and preserved over a long period of time. In a similar way, we progressively become purified and sanctified as you and I are washed in the blood of the Lamb, are born again, and receive the ordinances and honor the

covenants that are administered by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

“Nevertheless they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God” (Helaman 3:35).

The word *sealing* in my message today does not refer exclusively to the ordinance of eternal marriage performed in the house of the Lord. Rather, I am using this particular word as explained in the 76th section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

“This is the testimony of the gospel of Christ concerning them who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just—

“They are they who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in the water in his name, and this according to the commandment which he has given—

“That by keeping the commandments they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power;

“And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true” (vv. 50–53).

The Holy Spirit of Promise is the ratifying power of the Holy Ghost. When sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, an ordinance, vow, or covenant is binding on earth and in heaven. (See D&C 132:7.) Receiving this “stamp of approval” from the Holy Ghost is the result of faithfulness, integrity, and steadfastness in honoring gospel covenants “in [the] process of time” (Moses 7:21). However, this sealing can be forfeited through unrighteousness and transgression.

Purifying and sealing by the Holy Spirit of Promise constitute the culminat-

ing steps in the process of being born again.

### **“In the energy of my soul”**

My beloved brothers and sisters, I pray this parable of the pickle may help us to evaluate our lives and to better understand the eternal importance of spiritual rebirth. With Alma, “I speak in the energy of my soul” (Alma 5:43).

“I say unto you that this is the order after which I am called, yea, to preach unto my beloved brethren, yea, and every one that dwelleth in the land; yea, to preach unto all, both old and young, both bond and free; yea, I say unto you the aged, and also the middle aged, and the rising generation; yea, to cry unto them that they must repent and be born again” (Alma 5:49).

I witness the reality and divinity of a living Savior who invites us to come unto Him and be transformed. I testify His Church and priesthood authority have been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Through faith in Christ, we can be spiritually prepared and cleansed from sin, immersed in and saturated with His gospel, and purified and sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise—even born again. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “Search, Ponder, and Pray.”

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### **President Monson**

We are grateful to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they provided this morning. President Hinckley has asked that I now speak to you. Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Paul E. Koelliker of the Seventy, and conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

## President Thomas S. Monson

### “If a man die, shall he live again?”

Recently I was looking through some family photo albums. Cherished memories flooded my mind as I came across image after image of loved ones gathered at family outings, birthdays, reunions, anniversaries. Since these photographs were taken, some of those beloved family members have departed this life. I thought of the words of the Lord, “Thou shalt live together in love, inasmuch that thou shalt weep for the loss of them that die.”<sup>1</sup> I miss each one who has left our family circle.

Though difficult and painful, death is an essential part of our mortal experience. We began our sojourn here by leaving our premortal existence and coming to this earth. The poet Wordsworth captured that journey in his inspired ode to immortality. He wrote:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:  
The Soul that rises with us, our life's  
Star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar:  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home:  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!<sup>2</sup>

Life moves on. Youth follows childhood, and maturity comes ever so imperceptibly. As we search and ponder the purpose and the problems of life, all of us sooner or later face the question of the length of life and of a personal, everlasting life. These questions most insistently assert themselves when loved ones leave us or when we face leaving those we love.

At such times, we ponder the universal question, best phrased by Job of old, who centuries ago asked, “If a man die, shall he live again?”<sup>3</sup>

### Skepticism in the world

Today, as always, the skeptic's voice challenges the word of God, and each must choose to whom he will listen. Clarence Darrow, the famous lawyer and agnostic, declared, “No life is of much value, and . . . every death is [but a] little loss.”<sup>4</sup> Schopenhauer, the German philosopher and pessimist, wrote, “To desire immortality is to desire the eternal perpetuation of a great mistake.”<sup>5</sup> And to their words are added those of new generations, as foolish men crucify the Christ anew—for they modify His miracles, doubt His divinity, and reject His Resurrection.

Robert Blatchford, in his book *God and My Neighbor*, attacked with vigor accepted Christian beliefs, such as God, Christ, prayer, and immortality. He boldly asserted, “I claim to have proved everything I set out to prove so fully and decisively that no Christian, however great or able he may be, can answer my arguments or shake my case.”<sup>6</sup> He surrounded himself with a wall of skepticism. Then a surprising thing happened. His wall suddenly crumbled to dust. He was left exposed and undefended. Slowly he began to feel his way back to the faith he had scorned and ridiculed. What had caused this profound change in his outlook? *His wife died*. With a broken heart, he went into the room where lay all that was mortal of her. He looked again at the face he loved so well. Coming out, he said to a friend: “It is she, and yet it is not she. Everything is changed. Something that was there before is taken away. She is not the same. What can be gone if it be not the soul?”

Later he wrote: “Death is not what some people imagine. It is only like going into another room. In that other room we shall find . . . the dear women and men and the sweet children we have loved and lost.”<sup>7</sup>



## Testimonies of Christ's Resurrection

Against the doubting in today's world concerning Christ's divinity, we seek a point of reference, an unimpeachable source, even a testimony of eyewitnesses. Stephen, from biblical times, doomed to the cruel death of a martyr, looked up to heaven and cried, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."<sup>8</sup>

Who can help but be convinced by the stirring testimony of Paul to the Corinthians? He declared "that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: and . . . was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: . . . And," said Paul, "last of all he was seen of me."<sup>9</sup>

In our dispensation, this same testimony was spoken boldly by the Prophet Joseph Smith, as he and Sidney Rigdon testified, "And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!"<sup>10</sup>

This is the knowledge that sustains. This is the truth that comforts. This is the assurance that guides those who are bowed down with grief—out of the shadows and into the light.

## A family's testimony of the Resurrection

On Christmas Eve, 1997, I met a remarkable family. Each member of the family had an unshakable testimony of the truth and of the reality of the Resurrection. The family consisted of a mother and father and four children. Each of the children—three sons and a daughter—had been born with a rare form of muscular dystrophy, and each was handicapped. Mark, who was then 16 years old, had undergone spinal surgery in an effort to help him move about more freely. The other two boys—Christopher, age 13, and Jason, age 10—were to leave for California in a few days to undergo similar surgery.

The only daughter, Shanna, was then five years old—a beautiful child. All of the children were intelligent and faith-filled, and it was obvious that their parents, Bill and Sherry, were proud of each one. We visited for a while, and the special spirit of that family filled my office and my heart. The father and I gave blessings to the two boys who were facing surgery, and then the parents asked if little Shanna could sing for me. Her father mentioned that she had diminished lung capacity and that it might be difficult for her, but that she wanted to try. To the accompaniment of a recorded cassette, and in a beautiful, clear voice—never missing a note—she sang of a brighter future:

On a beautiful day that I dream about  
In a world I would love to see  
Is a beautiful place where the sun  
comes out  
And it shines in the sky for me.  
On this beautiful winter's morning,  
If my wish could come true somehow,  
Then the beautiful day that I dream  
about  
Would be here and now.<sup>11</sup>

The emotions of all of us were very near the surface as she finished. The spirituality of this visit set the tone for my Christmas that year.

I kept in touch with the family, and when the oldest son, Mark, turned 19, arrangements were made for him to serve a special mission at Church headquarters. Eventually, the other two brothers also had an opportunity to serve such missions.

Nearly a year ago, Christopher, who was then 22 years old, succumbed to the disease with which each of the children has been afflicted. And then, last September, I received word that little Shanna, now 14 years old, had passed away. At the funeral services, Shanna was honored by beautiful tributes. Leaning on the pulpit for support, each of her surviving brothers, Mark and Jason, shared poignant family experiences. Shanna's mother sang a lovely musical

number as part of a duet. Her father and grandfather gave touching sermons. Though their hearts were broken, each bore powerful and deep-felt testimony of the reality of the Resurrection and of the actuality that Shanna lives still, as does her brother Christopher, each awaiting a glorious reunion with their beloved family.

When it was my time to speak, I recounted that visit the family made to my office nearly nine years earlier and spoke of the lovely song Shanna sang on that occasion. I concluded with the thought: "Because our Savior died at Calvary, death has no hold upon any one of us. Shanna lives, whole and well, and for her that beautiful day she sang about on a special Christmas Eve in 1997, the day she dreamed about, *is here and now.*"

### **The Crucifixion and the Resurrection**

My brothers and sisters, we laugh, we cry, we work, we play, we love, we live. And then we die. Death is our universal heritage. All must pass its portals. Death claims the aged, the weary and worn. It visits the youth in the bloom of hope and the glory of expectation. Nor are little children kept beyond its grasp. In the words of the Apostle Paul, "It is appointed unto men once to die."<sup>12</sup>

And dead we would remain but for one Man and His mission, even Jesus of Nazareth. Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, His birth fulfilled the inspired pronouncements of many prophets. He was taught from on high. He provided the life, the light, and the way. Multitudes followed Him. Children adored Him. The haughty rejected Him. He spoke in parables. He taught by example. He lived a perfect life.

Though the King of kings and Lord of lords had come, He was accorded by some the greeting given to an enemy, a traitor. There followed a mockery which some called a trial. Cries of "Crucify him, crucify him"<sup>13</sup> filled the air. Then commenced the climb to Calvary's hill.

He was ridiculed, reviled, mocked, jeered, and nailed to a cross amidst shouts of "Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe."<sup>14</sup> "He saved others; himself he cannot save."<sup>15</sup> His response: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."<sup>16</sup> "Into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost."<sup>17</sup> His body was placed by loving hands in a sepulchre hewn of stone.

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, along with others, came to the sepulchre. To their astonishment, the body of their Lord was gone. Luke records that two men in shining garments stood by them and said: "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen."<sup>18</sup>

Next week the Christian world will celebrate the most significant event in recorded history. The simple pronouncement, "He is not here, but is risen," was the first confirmation of the literal Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The empty tomb that first Easter morning brought comforting assurance, an affirmative answer to Job's question, "If a man die, shall he live again?"<sup>19</sup>

### **The assurance of everlasting life**

To all who have lost loved ones, we would turn Job's question to an answer: If a man die, he *shall* live again. We know, for we have the light of revealed truth. "I am the resurrection, and the life," spoke the Master. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."<sup>20</sup>

Through tears and trials, through fears and sorrows, through the heartache and loneliness of losing loved ones, there is assurance that life is everlasting. Our Lord and Savior is the living witness that such is so.

With all my heart and the fervency of my soul, I lift up my voice in testimony as a special witness and declare that God does live. Jesus is His Son, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. He is our Redeemer; He is our Mediator with the Father. He it was who died on the cross to atone for our sins. He became the first-fruits of the Resurrection. Because He died, all shall live again. "Oh, sweet the joy this sentence gives: 'I know that my Redeemer lives!'"<sup>21</sup> May the whole world know it and live by that knowledge, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord and Savior, amen.

## NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 42:45.
2. William Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," in *The Oxford Book of English Verse: 1250–1900*, ed. Arthur Quiller-Couch (1939), 628.
3. Job 14:14.
4. *The Story of My Life* (1932), 450.
5. Arthur Schopenhauer, in *The Home Book of Quotations*, sel. Burton Stevenson (1934), 969.

6. *God and My Neighbor* (1914).
7. See *More Things in Heaven and Earth: Adventures in Quest of a Soul* (1925), 11.
8. Acts 7:56.
9. 1 Corinthians 15:3–5, 8.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 76:22.
11. "The Beautiful Day," from the movie *Scrooge* (1970), music and lyrics by Leslie Bricusse.
12. Hebrews 9:27.
13. Luke 23:21.
14. Mark 15:32.
15. Mark 15:31.
16. Luke 23:34.
17. Luke 23:46.
18. Luke 24:5–6.
19. Job 14:14.
20. John 11:25–26.
21. "I Know That My Redeemer Lives," *Hymns*, no. 136; see also Job 19:25.

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The choir sang "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing."

Elder Paul E. Koelliker offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 177th Annual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 31, 2007. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and John Longhurst and Richard Elliott were the organists.

**President Gordon B. Hinckley**

We welcome you this afternoon to the second general session of the 177th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

This session is originating from the historic Tabernacle in Salt Lake City. It has been beautifully refurbished, and we will rededicate it during this session. As we sit here, it brings back a thousand memories as we contemplate the past when we held so many meetings of various kinds in this great hall.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with

John Longhurst and Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “Redeemer of Israel.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Lowell M. Snow of the Seventy, followed by the choir singing “Come, Come, Ye Saints.” We will then be pleased to hear from President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve. He will be followed by Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Presi-

dency of the Seventy, after which we shall hear from Bishop H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop of the Church. The choir will then sing “We Love Thy House, O God.”

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The choir sang “Redeemer of Israel.” Elder Lowell M. Snow offered the invocation.

The choir sang “Come, Come, Ye Saints.”

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## President Boyd K. Packer

### A defining experience

Forty-six years ago I was called as an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve, and for the first time, I came to this pulpit. I was 37 years old. I found myself standing among the venerable and wise prophets and apostles, “whose names,” as the song proclaims, “we all revere” (“Oh, Holy Words of Truth and Love,” *Hymns*, no. 271). I felt how keenly inadequate I was.

About that time here in the Tabernacle I had a defining experience. It gave me assurance and courage.

In those days Primary conference was held here before the April conference. I came through a south door as the opening song was being sung by a large choir of Primary children. Sister Lue S. Groesbeck, a member of the Primary general board, was leading them. They sang:

Rev'rently, quietly, lovingly we think of thee;

Rev'rently, quietly, softly sing our melody.

Rev'rently, quietly, humbly now we pray,

Let thy Holy Spirit dwell in our hearts today.

(“Reverently, Quietly,” *Children's Songbook*, 26)

As the children sang quietly, the organist, who understood that excellence does not call attention to itself, did not play a solo while they sang. He skillfully, almost invisibly blended the young voices into a melody of inspiration, of revelation. That was the defining moment. It fixed deeply and permanently in my soul that which I most needed to sustain me in the years to follow.

### The still, small voice

I felt perhaps that which Elijah the prophet had felt. He sealed the heavens against the wicked king Ahab and fled to a cave to seek the Lord:

“A great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks . . . ; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake:

“And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire [came] a still small voice.

“And it was so,” the record says, “when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave” to speak to the Lord (1 Kings 19:11–13).

I felt something of what the Nephites must have felt when the Lord appeared to them: “They heard a voice as if it came

out of heaven; and they cast their eyes round about, for they understood not the voice which they heard; and it was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice; nevertheless, and notwithstanding it being a small voice it did pierce them that did hear to the center, insomuch that there was no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake; yea, it did pierce them to the very soul, and did cause their hearts to burn” (3 Nephi 11:3).

It is this still, small voice which Elijah and the Nephites heard that the Prophet Joseph Smith understood when he wrote, “Thus saith the still small voice, which whispereth through and pierceth all things” (D&C 85:6).

In that defining moment, I understood that the still, small voice is felt more than heard. If I hearkened to it, I would be all right in my ministry.

After that, I had the assurance that the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, is there for everyone who will respond to the invitation to ask, to seek, and to knock (see Matthew 7:7–8; Luke 11:9–10; 3 Nephi 14:7–8; D&C 88:63). I knew I would be all right. As the years have unfolded, so it has been.

### **Power of music**

I learned too what power there can be in music. When music is reverently presented, it can be akin to revelation. At times, I think, it cannot be separated from the voice of the Lord, the quiet, still voice of the Spirit.

Worthy music of all kinds has its place. And there are endless numbers of places where it can be heard. But the Tabernacle on Temple Square is different from them all.

For generations the Tabernacle Choir opened its weekly broadcast singing these words written by William W. Phelps:

Gently raise the sacred strain,  
For the Sabbath's come again  
That man may rest, . . .

And return his thanks to God  
For his blessings to the blest.  
("Gently Raise the Sacred Strain,"  
*Hymns*, no. 146)

### **Influence of past leaders**

More than 100 years ago, President Wilford Woodruff, then 91 years of age, delivered what may have been his last sermon from this pulpit. In the audience was 12-year-old LeGrand Richards. His father, George F. Richards (later ordained an Apostle), brought his boys to the Tabernacle to hear the Brethren. LeGrand never forgot that experience.

For more than 20 years, I was very close to Elder LeGrand Richards. When he was 96 years old, that message still lingered in his heart. He could not remember the words President Woodruff said, but he could never forget how he felt when they were said.

On occasions, I have felt the presence of those who built and kept this Tabernacle. By music and the spoken word, those who came before maintained the simplicity of the gospel and the testimony of Jesus Christ. That testimony was the guiding light in their lives.

### **Historic events in the Tabernacle**

Great events which shaped the destiny of the Church have occurred in this Tabernacle at Temple Square.

Every President of the Church, except Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, has been sustained in a solemn assembly in this Tabernacle. And in similar manner, the sustaining procedure is repeated annually in general conference and duplicated in every stake and ward and branch as required by revelation.

The Lord said, "It shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority,

and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church" (D&C 42:11).

In this way, no stranger can come among us and claim to have authority and attempt to lead the Church astray.

Here in 1880 the Pearl of Great Price was accepted as one of the standard works of the Church.

Here also two revelations were added to the standard works, now known as Doctrine and Covenants sections 137 and 138. Section 137 records a vision given to the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple, and section 138 is a vision given to President Joseph F. Smith concerning the Savior's visit to the spirits of the dead.

Here in 1979, after years of preparation, the LDS version of the King James Bible was introduced to the Church.

The new editions of the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price were announced to the Church here.

In 1908 in a general conference, President Joseph F. Smith read section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants—the Word of Wisdom. Then he, both of his counselors, and the President of the Twelve all spoke to the same subject, the Word of Wisdom. Then a vote to accept it as binding upon the members of the Church was unanimously passed.

That revelation begins, "In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation" (D&C 89:4).

It is a shield and a protection unto our people, particularly to our youth. It becomes a part of that "whole armor" of God promised in the revelations to protect them from the "fiery darts" of the adversary (see D&C 27:15–18).

The Church and individual members of it have always been, are now, and ever will be under siege from the adversary. He

will cover, even erase the still, small voice through loud and dissonant music awash with lyrics that cannot be understood—or worse, by lyrics that can be understood. He will carefully lead us astray with every other temptation he could devise.

Here by revelation the Lord clarified the order of the priesthood, and this opened the doors to fulfill the commandment of the Savior to take the gospel to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (D&C 133:37) and to cause the Church to be established among them.

Here the Book of Mormon was given the subtitle "Another Testament of Jesus Christ." Thereafter, whoever opens the book will know from the very title what is offered within.

### **The Tabernacle is a house of God**

The teachings, the sermons, the music, and the feelings and Spirit in this sacred building transfer without being diminished to the great Conference Center nearby, where they are heard by tens of thousands, translated into dozens of languages, and sent to congregations across the world.

Even more, that Spirit enters into the homes of millions upon millions of Latter-day Saints. In the homes, parents pray for the well-being of their children. Men and women and, as the Book of Mormon promised, even little children can receive the testimony of Jesus Christ (see Mosiah 24:22; Alma 32:23; 3 Nephi 17:25) and of the Restoration of His gospel.

This Tabernacle on Temple Square is "a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of glory and of God, even [His] house" (D&C 109:16). Those called to speak or to perform words, music, and culture are obligated to present that which is worthy.

To seek after the praise of men, the scriptures caution us, is to be led carefully away from the only safe path to follow in life (see John 12:43; 1 Nephi 13:9; 2 Nephi

26:29; Helaman 7:21; Mormon 8:38; D&C 58:39). And the scriptures warn us plainly what follows when we “aspire to the honors of men” (D&C 121:35).

It is not so much what is heard in the sermons but what is felt. The Holy Ghost can confirm to all who come within that influence that the messages are true, that this is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

### **A standard of the Restoration**

The Tabernacle stands here next to the temple as an anchor and has become symbolic of the Restoration. It was built by very poor and very, very ordinary people. It is now known worldwide.

The Tabernacle Choir, identified by the name of this building, has been a voice of the Church for many years. May they never drift from or allow themselves to be pulled away from the central mission which has been their place for generations.

For generation after generation the choir has opened and closed each broadcast with a message of inspiration, rich in principle and anchored in the doctrines of the Restoration, beginning with “Gently Raise the Sacred Strain” (*Hymns*, no. 146) and closing with “As the Dew from Heaven Distilling” (*Hymns*, no. 149).

The Tabernacle stands in the world as one of the great centers of worthy music and culture. But most of all, it stands as a standard of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. That simple testimony was embedded deeply and permanently in me here in this building by those Primary children singing in reverent, revelatory tones.

God bless this sacred building and all that transpires within its walls. How grateful we are that it has been renewed and refurbished without losing its sacred character.

### **As the dew from heaven**

Elder Parley P. Pratt of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles read these words from section 121 in the Doctrine and Covenants: “Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

“The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever” (D&C 121:45–46).

Deeply moved, Parley P. Pratt turned his thoughts to a hymn which is actually a prayer. For many years it was chosen by the choir to close its weekly broadcast:

As the dew from heav’n distilling  
Gently on the grass descends  
And revives it, thus fulfilling  
What thy providence intends,

Let thy doctrine, Lord, so gracious,  
Thus descending from above,  
Blest by thee, prove efficacious  
To fulfill thy work of love.

Lord, behold this congregation;  
Precious promises fulfill.  
From thy holy habitation  
Let the dews of life distill.

Let our cry come up before thee.  
Thy sweet Spirit shed around,  
So the people shall adore thee  
And confess the joyful sound.  
 (“As the Dew from Heaven Distilling,”  
*Hymns*, no. 149)

I add my testimony that Jesus is the Christ, that this is His house, on this sacred day of dedication, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Earl C. Tingey

### Prophets—pioneer and modern day

My brothers and sisters, as I stand at the pulpit of this old but new Tabernacle, I am overwhelmed with the sense of history I feel at this moment. As one foot is planted in the past and the other in the future, I give thanks for pioneer and modern-day prophets and apostles who have had and still have the vision to construct and extend into the future this remarkable building.

I wish to speak of two such men of vision: Brigham Young and his successor today.

### Brigham Young

Brigham Young was the second prophet of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He led the Church for 33 years. He built this Tabernacle and presided at its dedication during the October general conference in 1875, more than 131 years ago.

His other accomplishments were many, and I can refer to only a few.

*He was a pioneer*, meaning someone who opens or prepares the way for others to follow. One writer said of Brigham Young: “He led a ragged and impoverished band, stripped of virtually all their earthly goods, into an unknown territory. His critics and biographers note that the man was unique among the leaders of modern history, for he alone, without any political and financial backing, established from scratch in the desert an ordered and industrious society, having no other authority than the priesthood and the spiritual strength with which he delivered his teachings. By constant exhortations and instructions, he drew his people together and inspired them in carrying out the divine mandate to build up the kingdom of God on earth.”<sup>1</sup>

When Brigham Young first entered the valley of the Great Salt Lake, he de-

clared, “This is the right place.”<sup>2</sup> He later said:

“God has shown me, that this is the spot to locate his people, and here is where they will prosper; he will temper the elements to the good of the Saints; he will rebuke the frost and the sterility of the soil, and the land shall become fruitful, . . . and we shall build a city and a temple to the most high God in this place.”<sup>3</sup>

Today, we can all attest to the truth of this prophecy. Truly, the desert land and the valleys of the Rocky Mountains are a fruitful and a productive land of promise and prophecy.

*He built temples.* He started the Salt Lake Temple, which took 40 years to complete. He also started the Manti and the Logan Temples. He presided at the dedication of the St. George Temple four and a half months before he died.

*He was one of America’s greatest colonizers.* By the time of his death, nearly 400 colonies had been established.

*He organized the Perpetual Emigrating Fund* to reach out to those in need, assisting those of limited means in emigrating from countries in Europe.

*He established universities.* The University of Deseret is now known as the University of Utah. Latter-day Saints’ College is now known as LDS Business College. And, of course, he also established Brigham Young University.

*He loved the Church and its members.* Brigham Young had a unique way in which he referred to the Church:

“God is at the helm. This is the mighty ship Zion. You stick to the ship and honor it, and see that you are in favor with the ship Zion and you need not worry about anything else. . . .

“ . . . He guides the ship, and will bring us safely into port. All we have to care about is to take care of ourselves and see that we do right. Let us man the ship manfully, everyone standing faithfully and



firmly to his post, and she will outlive every storm and safely bear us to the harbor of celestial bliss.”<sup>4</sup>

*He loved the youth of the Church*, as is evidenced by the experience of Heber J. Grant. Nine days after Heber’s birth, his father, Jedediah M. Grant, who was Second Counselor to President Brigham Young, died. For the next 21 years, Brigham Young took special interest in the boy Heber J. Grant.

Heber J. Grant wrote:

“I was almost as familiar in the homes of President Brigham Young as I was in the home of my own mother. In one home . . . if I was hungry I felt as free to go in and ask for something to eat there as in my own home. . . . I knelt down time and time again in his home in the Lion House at family prayers, as a child and as a young man.”<sup>5</sup>

*He loved the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Of this, he said:

“What I have received from the Lord, I have received by Joseph Smith.”<sup>6</sup>

“I love his doctrine. . . . I feel like shouting Hallelujah, all the time, when I think that I ever knew Joseph Smith.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Gordon B. Hinckley**

How I love Brigham Young. His modern-day successor is President Gordon B. Hinckley, also a beloved and revered prophet.

A beautiful painting shows President Hinckley looking forward to the future, a set of architectural drawings before him. In the background is a portrait of Brigham Young, making it appear that President Young looks over President Hinckley’s shoulder.

The portrait of Brigham Young shown in this painting actually hangs in President Hinckley’s office, and he has often spoken of it. In a recent general conference, he said:

“At the close of one particularly difficult day, I looked up at a portrait of

Brigham Young that hangs on my wall. I asked, ‘Brother Brigham, what should we do?’ I thought I saw him smile a little, and then he seemed to say, ‘In my day, I had problems enough of my own. Don’t ask me what to do. This is your watch. Ask the Lord, whose work this really is.’”<sup>8</sup>

These two great prophets, President Brigham Young and President Gordon B. Hinckley, are linked together in their shared prophetic vision that comes from seeing the future and having the faith to bring that vision into present reality.

*President Hinckley, like Brigham Young, is a pioneer and a builder*. He has traveled the world, meeting kings, queens, and presidents. He has been interviewed by the world’s media. He continues to bring the Church “out of obscurity.”<sup>9</sup> More than 75 temples have been built in the last 12 years. And he had the inspiration to build the majestic Conference Center.

*President Hinckley, like Brigham Young, spreads the gospel and values education*. Church membership now approaches 13 million in 176 nations, territories, and countries. More than 53,000 missionaries circle the globe. This conference is being translated into 90 languages. He continues to support Church universities and Church education. More than 26,000 members now enjoy the benefits of the Perpetual Education Fund.

*President Hinckley, like Brigham Young, loves the youth and all members of the Church*. The youth of the Church especially reach out to President Hinckley for prophetic counsel.

*President Hinckley loves the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Several years ago, he said:

“I worship the God of heaven who is my Eternal Father. I worship the Lord Jesus Christ who is my Savior and my Redeemer. I do not worship the Prophet Joseph Smith, but I reverence and love this great seer through whom the miracle of this gospel has been restored. I am now growing old, and I know that in the natural course of events before many years, I will

step across the threshold to stand before my Maker and my Lord and give an accounting of my life. And I hope that I shall have the opportunity of embracing the Prophet Joseph Smith and of thanking him and of speaking of my love for him.”<sup>10</sup>

I bear my humble witness that both President Brigham Young and President Gordon B. Hinckley are prophets who have led the Church by inspiration and revelation. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Hugh W. Nibley, in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. (1992), 4:1611.
2. In B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 3:224.
3. Quoted in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965–75), 6:265.
4. Quoted in Preston Nibley, *Brigham Young: The Man and His Work* (1936), 293, 352.
5. *Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham (1941), 223.
6. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 345.
7. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 458.
8. In Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 85; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 82.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.
10. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 509.

## Bishop H. David Burton

### The “old original Tabernacle”

President Gordon B. Hinckley said in an October 2004 press conference: “I respect this building. I love this building; I honor this building. I want it preserved. . . . I want the old original Tabernacle—its weak joints bound together . . . and strengthened and its natural and wonderful beauty preserved.”<sup>1</sup> Then he looked at me and said, “Don’t you do anything you shouldn’t do, but whatever you do, do well and do right.”

With those stirring but intimidating words, a charge was extended to preserve, strengthen, and return the old original Salt Lake Tabernacle, revitalized and ready for another period of distinguished service.

Today, dear President, we present this senior citizen of a building, all attired in a fresh new finish, fitly framed together in its historical elegance—although a bit more comfortable. The Presiding Bishopric, along with more than 2,000 craftsmen, proudly return the “old original Tabernacle,” along with a 100-year warranty.

President Hinckley’s request to return the “old original Tabernacle” became the

standard for making difficult architectural and construction decisions. The phrase was used to express the essence and objective of the project. It served as the equivalent of Captain Moroni’s title of liberty in that it was, in effect, “hoisted upon every tower” and raised in “whatsoever place”<sup>2</sup> was necessary.

### Renovations to the Tabernacle

If these old walls could talk, they would join in expressing sincere appreciation to FFKR Architects, Jacobsen Construction Company, and most important, the entire Church project team, along with the many whose skills have made a complex endeavor possible. One senior team member remarked, “As we counseled together, the Lord was able to give us capability beyond our own natural means.”

Project members felt great reverence for the beauty of the Tabernacle, for its original builders, and for the quality of their work. They marveled that for more than a century, words of the latter-day prophets, seers, and revelators have gone forth from this podium to the world.

If these old walls could talk, I'm confident they would express appreciation for their new firm foundation. These old walls would be delighted with their new steel belt, which holds them tall and erect. These old walls would say thank you for scraping 14 layers of paint from the ceiling, then patching and applying a beautiful new coat.

These old walls would express gratitude for the protection and beauty of a shiny new aluminum roof and would join with the benches in enjoying the smiles on faces of patrons as they discover the slightly modified seats and a few more inches of knee room.

New facilities to better accommodate the strains of inspirational music would be welcomed and appreciated by these old walls.

One can only imagine what these old walls could recall about the many sermons they carefully listened to over the years.

### **President Joseph F. Smith's vision**

These old walls, if they could talk, would shout, "We were here!" when President Joseph F. Smith rose from a prolonged illness to attend a session of general conference in October 1918. In the opening session, with a voice filled with emotion, he said, "I will not, I dare not, attempt to enter upon many things that are resting upon my mind this morning, and I shall postpone until some future time, the Lord being willing, my attempt to tell you some of the things that are in my mind, and that dwell in my heart." He continued: "I have not lived alone these five months. I have dwelt in the spirit of prayer, of supplication, of faith and of determination; and I have had my communication with the Spirit of the Lord continuously."<sup>3</sup> We later learned that on the day before conference started, President Smith received a manifestation recorded as the vision of the redemption of the dead, which later became section 138 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

### **The Church welfare plan**

If these old walls could talk, they would remind us of the bleak, dark days of the Great Depression. They would recall the April 1936 general conference, when President Heber J. Grant announced the Church would inaugurate a Church security plan, later known as the Church welfare plan. Six months later he explained: "Our primary purpose was to set up . . . a system under which the curse of idleness would be done away with, the evils of a dole abolished, and independence, industry, thrift and self respect be once more established amongst our people. The aim of the Church is to help the people to help themselves. Work is to be re-enthroned as the ruling principle of the lives of our Church membership."<sup>4</sup>

### **Family home evening**

In October 1964, by assignment from President David O. McKay, Elder Harold B. Lee spoke about parental responsibilities. These old walls remember Elder Lee stating he would read from a 1915 letter to the Church signed by the First Presidency. But before starting, he remarked, "I suppose it is something like Mark Twain said about the weather: 'We talk a lot about the weather, but we don't seem to do anything about it.'" Elder Lee then read from the 50-year-old letter:

"We advise and urge the inauguration of a 'Home Evening' throughout the Church, at which time father and mother may gather their boys and girls about them in the home, and teach them the word of the Lord."

And then this promise:

"If the Saints obey this counsel, we promise that great blessings will result. Love at home and obedience to parents will increase. Faith will be developed in the hearts of the youth of Israel, and they will gain power to combat the evil influences and temptations which beset them."<sup>5</sup>

### Elder Bruce R. McConkie's testimony

These old walls remember the profound silence that came over the Tabernacle in 1985 when it was announced that Elder Bruce R. McConkie would address the conference. These old walls felt a deep spirit of reverence as Elder McConkie concluded his remarks with these electrifying words:

"And now, as pertaining to this perfect atonement, wrought by the shedding of the blood of God—I testify that it took place in Gethsemane and at Golgotha, and as pertaining to Jesus Christ, I testify that he is the Son of the Living God and was crucified for the sins of the world. He is our Lord, our God, and our King. This I know of myself independent of any other person.

"I am one of his witnesses, and in a coming day I shall feel the nail marks in his hands and in his feet and shall wet his feet with my tears.

"But I shall not know any better than I know now that he is God's Almighty Son, that he is our Savior and Redeemer, and that salvation comes in and through his atoning blood and in no other way."<sup>6</sup>

### The proclamation on the family

In 1995 President Gordon B. Hinckley said to the women of the Church, "With so much of sophistry that is passed off as truth, with so much of deception concerning standards and values, with so much of allurements and enticement to take on the slow stain of the world, we have felt to warn and forewarn." He then proceeded to read:

"We, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children. . . .

"Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. 'Children are an heritage of the Lord' (Psalms 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations."<sup>7</sup>

### A monument and ensign

I'm grateful for this extraordinary building. It stands as a sacred monument to our past and a magnificent ensign of hope for the future. I testify to the divinity of our Father in Heaven and of our Savior's abundant love for each of us. We are greatly blessed to be led by a prophet of God. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. In "Tabernacle to Close for Renovation," *Church News*, Oct. 16, 2004, 4.
2. Alma 46:36; 62:4.
3. In Conference Report, Oct. 1918, 2.
4. In Conference Report, Oct. 1936, 3.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1964, 83–84.
6. In Conference Report, Apr. 1985, 12; or *Ensign*, May 1985, 11.
7. "Stand Strong against the Wiles of the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 100–101.

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The choir sang "We Love Thy House, O God."

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### President Hinckley

The choir and congregation will now sing "How Firm a Foundation." Following the singing, we will hear from Sister Bonnie D. Parkin, who was released this morning as Relief Society general president.

Following her remarks, Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy will speak to us, after which we shall hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, and he will be followed by President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency. Following

President Monson's remarks, the choir will sing "This House We Dedicate to Thee."

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The choir and congregation sang  
 "How Firm a Foundation."

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## Bonnie D. Parkin

### Privileges of women in the Church

This afternoon I am honored to represent those Relief Society leaders who, here in this very Tabernacle, shared the doctrines of the kingdom, emphasized the significance of women's roles in the home and family, called each other to charitable service, and reminded their sisters of the joy that comes from righteous living.

From this pulpit in 1870, Eliza R. Snow asked thousands of women a question that I'd like to repeat today: "Do you know of any place on the face of the earth, where [a] woman has more liberty, and where she enjoys such high and glorious privileges as she does here, as a Latter-day Saint?"<sup>1</sup> I bear witness that the women of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints do enjoy grand and glorious privileges.

### Blessing basket

Let me share a sweet story with you. A family was going through a difficult time. It was hard for them not to focus on their challenges. The mother wrote: "Our world had completely crumpled, so we turned to Heavenly Father for guidance. Almost immediately we realized that we were surrounded by goodness and were being cheered on from every side. We began as a family to express our gratitude to each other as well as to the Lord daily. A close friend pointed out to me that our family's 'blessing basket' was overflowing. From that conversation came a sort of

game, which my children and I grew to love. Before family prayer each night we would talk about how our day had gone and then share with each other all of the many blessings that had been added to our 'blessing basket.' The more we expressed gratitude, the more there was to be grateful for. We felt the love of the Lord in a significant way as opportunities for growth presented themselves."<sup>2</sup>

What would a "blessing basket" add to your family?

### A Spirit-filled principle

Gratitude requires awareness and effort, not only to feel it but to express it. Frequently we are oblivious to the Lord's hand. We murmur, complain, resist, criticize; so often we are not grateful. In the Book of Mormon, we learn that those who murmur do not know "the dealings of that God who . . . created them."<sup>3</sup> The Lord counsels us not to murmur because it is then difficult for the Spirit to work with us.

Gratitude is a Spirit-filled principle. It opens our minds to a universe permeated with the richness of a living God. Through it, we become spiritually aware of the wonder of the smallest things, which gladden our hearts with their messages of God's love. This grateful awareness heightens our sensitivity to divine direction. When we communicate gratitude, we can be filled with the Spirit and connected to those around us and the Lord. Gratitude inspires happiness and carries divine influence.

“Live in thanksgiving daily,” said Amulek, “for the many mercies and blessings which he doth bestow upon you.”<sup>4</sup>

Mercies and blessings come in different forms—sometimes as hard things. Yet the Lord said, “Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in *all* things.”<sup>5</sup> *All things* means just that: good things, difficult things—not just some things. He has commanded us to be grateful because He knows being grateful will make us happy. This is another evidence of His love.

How do you feel when someone expresses gratitude to you? One Sunday I sat next to a sister in Relief Society and got to know her a little better. A few days later I received an e-mail: “Thank you for sitting next to my daughter in Relief Society. You put your arm around her. You will never know how much that meant to her and to me.”<sup>6</sup> This mother’s words surprised me and brought me happiness.

How do you feel when you express gratitude to another? I’d like to express gratitude to someone who cares about my grandchildren. A few months ago, while visiting in Texas, I asked six-year-old Thomas to tell me about his bishop. He said, “Oh, Grandmother, you will know him. He wears a dark suit, a white shirt like Papa, and he has shiny shoes and a red tie. He wears glasses and always has a smile.” I recognized Thomas’s bishop as soon as I saw him. My heart was filled with gratitude for him. Thank you, Bishop Goodman, and thank you, all you wonderful bishops.

### An expression of faith

Luke chapter 17 records the experience of the Savior when He healed 10 lepers. As you recall, only one of the cleansed lepers returned to express his appreciation. Isn’t it interesting that the Lord did not say, “Your *gratitude* has made you whole”? Instead, He said, “Thy *faith* hath made thee whole.”<sup>7</sup>

The leper’s expression of gratitude was recognized by the Savior as an expres-

sion of his faith. As we pray and express gratitude to a loving but unseen Heavenly Father, we are also expressing our faith in Him. Gratitude is our sweet acknowledgment of the Lord’s hand in our lives; it is an expression of our faith.

### Gratitude in tribulations: hidden blessings

In 1832 the Lord saw the need to prepare the Church for coming tribulations. Tribulations are frightening. And yet the Lord said: “Be of good cheer, for I will lead you along. The kingdom is yours and the blessings thereof are yours, and the riches of eternity are yours.

“And he who receiveth *all* things with thankfulness shall be made glorious.”<sup>8</sup>

The kind of gratitude that receives even tribulations with thanksgiving requires a broken heart and a contrite spirit; humility to accept that which we cannot change; willingness to turn everything over to the Lord, even when we do not understand; thankfulness for hidden opportunities yet to be revealed. Then comes a sense of peace.

When was the last time you thanked the Lord for a trial or tribulation? Adversity compels us to go to our knees; does gratitude for adversity do that as well?

President David O. McKay observed, “We find in the bitter chill of adversity the real test of our gratitude . . . , which . . . goes beneath the surface of life, whether sad or joyous.”<sup>9</sup>

### Conclusion

To my remarkable, faithful sisters of the Church, I thank you for the ways you extend the Lord’s love through your service: your care for families at the death of a loved one, your watchcare as you visit teach, your willingness to build testimonies in children as you serve in Primary, your time preparing young women for womanhood. Thank you for your devotion. I have

experienced the love of the Lord through your faithfulness. I have been blessed to serve among you; my heart is brimming over with gratitude and love for each of you. I have deep gratitude for the priesthood brethren with whom I've served.

My most profound gratitude is for my Savior—an obedient Son, who did all that His Father asked and atoned for every one of us. As I remember Him and acknowledge His goodness, I desire to be like Him. May we be blessed to feel of His love in our lives daily. “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”<sup>10</sup> In His sacred name, Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. In Jill C. Mulvay, “Eliza R. Snow and the Woman Question,” *Brigham Young University Studies*, winter 1976, 251.
2. Personal correspondence.
3. 1 Nephi 2:12.
4. Alma 34:38.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 59:7; italics added.
6. Personal correspondence.
7. Luke 17:19; italics added.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 78:18–19; italics added.
9. *Pathways to Happiness*, comp. Llewelyn R. McKay (1957), 318.
10. 2 Corinthians 9:15.

## Elder Marlin K. Jensen

### Treasured memories

I feel honored to follow Sister Parkin. Her service and teachings as well as those of her counselors have blessed all of us. About this same hour 18 and a half years ago, I was standing near this pulpit waiting for the congregational singing to end, when I was to step forward and give my first general conference address. My anxiety at that moment must have been obvious. Elder L. Tom Perry, who was standing behind me, leaned forward and, in his positive and enthusiastic way, whispered in my ear. “Relax,” he said, “we haven’t lost anyone at that pulpit in years!”

Those encouraging words and the few minutes that followed in which I spoke for the first time to a worldwide audience of Latter-day Saints constitute a treasured memory for me. Like all of you, I am constantly accumulating a reservoir of memories which, when recalled, make up a very useful and often enjoyable part of my consciousness. And, despite resolutions I made as a young man never to weary others with reminiscing when I grew older, I now take great pleasure in sharing my own memories at almost every possible

occasion. Today, however, I wish to speak of a more profound role of memory and remembering in the gospel of Jesus Christ than the passive recall and enjoyment of information.

### Active remembering

If we pay close attention to the uses of the word *remember* in the holy scriptures, we will recognize that remembering in the way God intends is a fundamental and saving principle of the gospel. This is so because prophetic admonitions to remember are frequently calls to action: to listen, to see, to do, to obey, to repent.<sup>1</sup> When we remember in God’s way, we overcome our human tendency simply to gird for the battle of life and actually engage in the battle itself, doing all in our power to resist temptation and avoid sinning.

King Benjamin called for such active remembering from his people:

“And finally, I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them.

“But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your

thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not.”<sup>2</sup>

### Remembering Church history

Realizing the vital role remembering is to play in our lives, what else ought we to remember? In response, assembled as we are today to remember and rededicate this historic Tabernacle, I suggest that the history of the Church of Jesus Christ and its people deserves our remembrance. The scriptures give the Church’s history high priority. In fact, much of scripture is Church history. On the very day the Church was organized, God commanded Joseph Smith, “Behold, there shall be a record kept among you.”<sup>3</sup> Joseph acted on this command by appointing Oliver Cowdery, the second elder in the Church and his chief assistant, as the first Church historian. We keep records to help us remember, and a record of the Church’s rise and progress has been kept from Oliver Cowdery’s time to the present day. This extraordinary historical record reminds us that God has again opened the heavens and revealed truths that call our generation to action.

Of all that has been collected, preserved, and written by historians over those many years, nothing exemplifies the importance and power of the Church’s history more than Joseph Smith’s simple and honest story of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appearing to him in what our history books now call the First Vision. In words that generations of missionaries have committed to memory and shared with seekers of truth the world over, Joseph describes the miraculous way in which he received an answer to his question posed in prayer of which Church is right:

“I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

“ . . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*”<sup>4</sup>

Hear him, Joseph did! And millions have heard or read and believed his account and have embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ he helped restore. I believe Joseph Smith and know he was a true prophet of God. Remembering his experience of the First Vision never fails to stir my soul to greater commitment and action.

### Keeping the past alive

No one has greater appreciation for the value of the Church’s history than President Gordon B. Hinckley. We love his delightful sense of humor, but his sense of history is equally keen. Inspiring stories and anecdotes from our past punctuate his writings and sermons. As our living prophet, he consciously emphasizes the past and the future to help us live more righteously in the present. Because of his teachings, we understand that remembering enables us to see God’s hand in our past, just as prophecy and faith assure us of God’s hand in our future. President Hinckley reminds us how members of the early Church faced their challenges so we, through the grace of God, can more faithfully face our own. By keeping our past alive, he connects us to the people, places, and events that make up our spiritual heritage and, in so doing, motivates us to greater service, faith, and kindness.

In an exemplary way President Hinckley also openly shares from his own personal and family histories. Scores of discouraged new missionaries have been comforted to learn that early in his own



mission, President Hinckley was also discouraged and admitted as much to his father. He even courageously shared his father's brief response: "Dear Gordon, I have your recent letter. I have only one suggestion: forget yourself and go to work."<sup>5</sup> Over 70 years later, we are all witnesses to how earnestly President Hinckley took that counsel to heart. His sterling character and prophetic wisdom provide persuasive proof for the benefits of remembering the Church's history as well as our own.

### Remembering the Savior

There is much more to say about memory and remembering in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We often speak of remembering our sacred covenants and God's commandments and of remembering and performing saving ordinances for our deceased ancestors. Most importantly, we speak of the need to remember our Savior Jesus Christ and not just when convenient, but always, as He asks.<sup>6</sup> We witness always to remember Him as we partake of the sacrament. In return, we are promised His

Spirit will always be with us. Interestingly, this is the same Spirit sent by our Heavenly Father to "bring all things to [our] remembrance."<sup>7</sup> Thus, by worthily receiving the sacrament, we are blessed by the Spirit to enter into a wonderfully beneficial circle of remembering, returning again and again in our thinking and devotion to Christ and His Atonement.

Coming unto Christ and being perfected in Him is, I believe, the ultimate purpose of all remembering.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, I pray that God will bless us always to remember, especially His perfect Son, and perish not. I gratefully testify of Christ's divinity and saving power. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See 2 Nephi 1:12; Mosiah 6:3; Helaman 5:14.
2. Mosiah 4:29–30.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 21:1.
4. Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17.
5. In Gordon B. Hinckley, *Faith: The Essence of True Religion* (1989), 115.
6. See 3 Nephi 18:7, 11.
7. John 14:26.
8. See Moroni 10:32–33.

## President James E. Faust

### Rededication of the Tabernacle

It is a great honor and privilege to be part of the rededication service of this great edifice, the Salt Lake Tabernacle, which stands west of the Salt Lake Temple. We acknowledge any and all who have had anything to do with the great work that has been done in this building. We especially thank the Presiding Bishopric—Bishop H. David Burton, Bishop Richard C. Edgley, and Bishop Keith B. McMullin—for their excellent leadership in directing the work of updating and restoring the Salt Lake Tabernacle.

I have fond memories as a boy coming to this Tabernacle. I was baptized

here. When I became a deacon, my father brought me here to attend general priesthood meeting. We came 15 minutes early and were easily able to get a seat in the balcony.

### Meeting places in early days of Church

In the early days of the Church, the only two buildings built specifically for worship were the temples in Kirtland and Nauvoo. Both were built according to revelation. The first recorded Church-constructed building designated as a meetinghouse was also intended to be used as a schoolhouse. It was built of logs in Missouri in 1831.<sup>1</sup>

By the time the Kirtland Temple was dedicated in 1836, it was already too small to hold all the Saints who wanted to attend the dedication. The Prophet Joseph Smith regretfully recorded that the building would not accommodate more.<sup>2</sup> However, as violence against the Saints and their leaders escalated in Kirtland, the main body of the Church moved to Missouri in 1838, leaving this precious building behind.

The Nauvoo Temple followed essentially the same pattern as the Kirtland Temple with respect to the assembly rooms on the first and second floors. However, before the Nauvoo Temple was completed in 1846, the Saints would meet outside, often near the temple, to hear Joseph and the other Church leaders speak. Sometimes thousands attended those meetings.

As George A. Smith observed in his humorous way, “In the days of the Prophet Joseph . . . Mormonism flourished best out of doors.” This was because “we failed to erect a building big enough to hold the Saints previous to the death of the Prophet.”<sup>3</sup>

Occasionally bad weather would interrupt those outdoor services, and both the speakers and congregation were uncomfortable. President Joseph F. Smith, who remembered well the discomfort of those outdoor meetings held near the temple in Nauvoo, said:

“My first recollection of a place of worship was in Nauvoo. It was in a little grove of trees near the site of the temple. In company with my mother I listened here to such men as Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, the Prophet Joseph and the Patriarch Hyrum. I remember quite well attending one meeting in this grove, that a wagon had been drawn up in front of the audience and the Prophet Joseph stood in the box speaking, when it began to rain. Some one or two persons got up and held umbrellas over him, to shield him from the wet. Many of the people had no umbrellas,

and it was very annoying and disagreeable to sit there, but I remember very well, though but a little boy, that there was no one went away from the ground while he spoke.”<sup>4</sup>

### Plans for a canvas tabernacle

Before his death, the Prophet Joseph directed that a canvas tabernacle be built to shelter the Saints during large meetings. In 1845, as the temple was nearing completion, Elder Orson Hyde of the Quorum of the Twelve was sent back East to raise funds and to buy “about four thousand yards” of canvas to build what Brigham Young referred to as “the Tabernacle of the congregation in Zion.”<sup>5</sup>

Brother Orson Pratt outlined the proposed location and design of the canvas tabernacle in a letter written on August 30, 1845:

“It is intended to erect a tabernacle of canvass in front of, and joining the Temple on the west. The form of this tabernacle will be that of an ellipse. . . . The area of its base will be sufficient to contain eight or ten thousand persons; its seats will gradually rise one above another in the form of an amphitheatre.”<sup>6</sup>

The brethren the next day began to clear the ground for the construction of the canvas tabernacle. However, because of the intense persecution from their enemies, the Saints had to leave Nauvoo, so the canvas tabernacle was never built. Orson Hyde “loaded the canvas into wagons in 1846 and headed west with it.”<sup>7</sup> Some have speculated that “the canvas was put to good use for such things as tents, tent ends and wagon covers” for the Saints in the exodus to the Salt Lake Valley.<sup>8</sup>

The finished Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City has dimensions roughly similar to the canvas tabernacle contemplated for Nauvoo, and like the proposed Nauvoo tabernacle, it also was situated just west of the temple. As with other matters, such as the great migration

to the West, Joseph Smith envisioned a great tabernacle, and Brigham Young made it a reality.

### Meeting the needs of members

So the tabernacle contemplated for Nauvoo, although never built, was a prototype for this historic building. When I was a boy, we listened to general conference on the radio; now with the use of satellites and modern electronic equipment, we broadcast from Salt Lake City to whole countries worldwide at one time—as we’re doing now—using downlinks to buildings all over the world. This came about because of the inspiration that came to the Brethren to meet the needs of the people in our day and time. This is a good example of how the Lord makes it possible to meet the needs of the members of the Church. I testify that the Lord will continue to reveal through His prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley, the ways and means to meet the needs of all members in an ever-growing Church.

I am grateful this magnificent building has been strengthened and renewed so

it can continue to be used to instruct and edify the children of God. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See Richard W. Jackson, *Places of Worship: 150 Years of Latter-day Saint Architecture* (2003), 16.
2. See *History of the Church*, 2:410–11.
3. *Deseret News*, Aug. 29, 1855, 194.
4. “The Spirit of Worship,” *Improvement Era*, June 1910, 749–50.
5. Brigham Young to the Saints Abroad, June 17, 1845, in *New York Messenger*, Aug. 16, 1845, 52; see also *History of the Church*, 7:427; Elden J. Watson, “The Nauvoo Tabernacle,” *Brigham Young University Studies*, spring 1979, 416.
6. Orson Pratt to Reuben Hedlock, Aug. 20, 1845, in *New York Messenger*, Aug. 30, 1845, 67; see also *Brigham Young University Studies*, spring 1979, 420.
7. Glen M. Leonard, *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, a People of Promise* (2002), 480.
8. *Brigham Young University Studies*, spring 1979, 421; see also William Smith claim in Glen M. Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 754, note 86.

## President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, both here in the Tabernacle and listening by various means throughout the world, it is a joy for me to stand before you once again in this magnificent building. In this setting one cannot help but feel the spirit of the early Saints who constructed this beautiful house of worship, as well as all those who over the years have labored to preserve and beautify it.

I have been thinking recently of the many significant events in my life which are associated with the Salt Lake Tabernacle. Although there are far too many for me to mention today, I would like to share just a few.

### Baptism in the Tabernacle

I recall the time I approached baptism, when I was eight years of age. My mother talked with me about repentance and about the meaning of baptism; and then, on a Saturday in September of 1935, she took me on a streetcar to the Tabernacle baptistry which, until recently, was here in this building. At the time it was not as customary as it is now for fathers to baptize their children, since the ordinance was generally performed on a Saturday morning or afternoon, and many fathers were working at their daily professions or trades. I dressed in white and was baptized. I remember that day as though it

were yesterday and the happiness I felt at having had this ordinance performed.

Over the years and particularly during the time I served as a bishop, I witnessed many other baptisms in the Tabernacle font. Each was a special and inspiring occasion, and each served to remind me of my own baptism.

### **A prophetic warning in 1950**

In April of 1950, my wife, Frances, and I were in attendance at the Sunday afternoon session of general conference, held in this building. President George Albert Smith was the President of the Church, and in closing the conference, he delivered an inspiring and powerful message concerning the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Before he concluded his remarks, however, he sounded a prophetic warning. Said he: "It will not be long until calamities will overtake the human family unless there is speedy repentance. It will not be long before those who are scattered over the face of the earth by millions will die . . . because of what will come" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1950, 169). These were alarming words, for they came from a prophet of God.

Two and a half months after that general conference, on June 25, 1950, war broke out in Korea—a war which would eventually claim an estimated 2.5 million lives. This event prompted me to reflect on the statement President Smith made as we sat in this building that spring day.

### **Call to the apostleship**

I attended many general conference sessions in the Tabernacle, always being edified and inspired by the words of the Brethren. Then, in October of 1963, President David O. McKay invited me to his office and extended to me a call to serve as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve

Apostles. He asked that I keep this sacred call confidential, revealing it to no one except my wife, and that I be present for general conference in the Tabernacle the next day, when my name would be read aloud.

The following morning I came into the Tabernacle not knowing exactly where to sit. Being a member of the Priesthood Home Teaching Committee, I determined that I would be seated among the members of that committee. I noticed a friend of mine by the name of Hugh Smith, who was also a member of the Priesthood Home Teaching Committee. He motioned for me to sit by him. I couldn't say a thing to him about my call, but I sat down.

During the session, the members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles were sustained and, of course, my name was read. I believe the walk from the audience to the stand was the longest walk of my life.

It has been nearly 44 years since that conference. Until the year 2000, when the Conference Center was dedicated, it was my privilege to deliver 101 general conference messages from the pulpit in this building, not including those given at general auxiliary conferences and other meetings held here. My remarks today bring the total to 102. I have had many spiritual experiences over the years as I have stood here.

### **A message for a little girl**

During the message I delivered at general conference in October 1975, I felt prompted to direct my remarks to a little girl with long blonde hair who was seated in the balcony of this building. I called the attention of the audience to her and felt a freedom of expression which testified to me that this small girl needed the message I had in mind concerning the faith of another young lady.

At the conclusion of the session, I returned to my office and found waiting for me a young child by the name of Misti White, together with her grandparents and

an aunt. As I greeted them, I recognized Misti as the one in the balcony to whom I had directed my remarks. I learned that as her eighth birthday approached, she was in a quandary concerning whether or not to be baptized. She felt she would like to be baptized, and her grandparents, with whom she lived, wanted her to be baptized, but her less-active mother suggested she wait until she was 18 years of age to make the decision. Misti had told her grandparents, "If we go to conference in Salt Lake City, maybe Heavenly Father will let me know what I should do."

Misti and her grandparents and her aunt had traveled from California to Salt Lake City for conference and were able to obtain seats in the Tabernacle for the Saturday afternoon session. This was where they were seated when my attention was drawn to Misti and my decision made to speak to her.

As we continued our visit after the session, Misti's grandmother said to me, "I think Misti has something she would like to tell you." This sweet young girl said, "Brother Monson, while you were speaking in conference, you answered my question. I want to be baptized!"

The family returned to California, and Misti was baptized and confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Through all the years since, Misti has remained true and faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Fourteen years ago, it was my privilege to perform her temple marriage to a fine young man, and together they are rearing five beautiful children, with another one on the way.

My brothers and sisters, I feel privileged to be standing once again at the Tabernacle pulpit in this building which holds for me such wonderful memories. The Tabernacle is a part of my life—a part which I cherish.

## **A pledge of rededication**

I have been honored and pleased during my lifetime to raise my arm to the square in sustaining nine Church Presidents as their names have been read. This morning I joined you in sustaining once again our beloved prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. It is a joy and a privilege to serve by his side, along with President Faust.

As this building is rededicated today, may we pledge to rededicate our lives to the work of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who so willingly died that we might live. May we follow in His footsteps each day, I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "This House We Dedicate to Thee."

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## **President Hinckley**

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 p.m. mountain daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will follow immediately.

We thank the choir for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon and express our thanks to all who have participated.

It will now be my pleasure to address you. Following my remarks and dedicatory prayer, this session will conclude with the choir singing "The Spirit of God." At the conclusion of the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder R. Conrad Schultz of the Seventy.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

This afternoon, my brothers and sisters, we gather again in this historic Tabernacle, where we have met in conference so many times before.

### Changes in the Tabernacle

Now this building has undergone extensive renovation and remodeling to bring it up to the latest seismic code. With this undertaking, we hope and pray that its historical features have not been destroyed.

Some of the old benches have been saved and will continue to be used. But as you've already discovered, the new benches are just as hard as the old ones were!

Exits have been added to meet modern-day requirements. The great stone pillars, which constitute its outside walls, have been greatly strengthened and fortified. The roof has been strengthened with the addition of steel trusses, with new roofing applied.

Changes in this building, I remind you, are not new. Even shortly after the days of its creation, it was modified. Originally there was no balcony, and this had to be added.

### A centerpiece for the community

Through these many years, this has been a unique and wonderful place of assembly. Many men and women have spoken here, testifying of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. From the time of Brigham Young to the present, every prophet has spoken from this pulpit. Other men and women of note have spoken, including various presidents of the United States. It has been a home for the arts and culture of this community. The Utah Symphony first used this as a place to perform. Great artistic productions have been presented here, such as the *Messiah* and the Tanner Gift of Music.

Funeral services for men and women of prominence have been conducted here. It has truly been a centerpiece for this community through all of these many years.

This is a peculiar building, the only one of its kind in all the world. It was built almost a century and a half ago in the days of the poverty of our people. It was literally a Tabernacle built in the wilderness. The temple was far from finished at the time. Those who built the Tabernacle did so with faith, as well as their rudimentary architectural skills. Skeptics, of whom there are always many, predicted that when the scaffolding was removed, the roof would come down with it. This did not happen, and it has remained in place through sunshine and storm through all of these many years.

It has become known across the world as the home of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, whose weekly radio broadcast has been heard longer than any other network program, over a period of more than 75 years, since 1929.

Now each Sabbath day, *Music and the Spoken Word* will again go to the world from this Tabernacle at "the crossroads of the West." It will again be home to the Tabernacle Choir and the Orchestra at Temple Square and will also accommodate many other productions and undertakings. It will be used for stake and regional conferences, public lectures, musical concerts, and other entertainment.

The *Millennial Star*, published in England, recorded under date of Saturday, October 9, 1875, that John Taylor gave a lengthy and detailed prayer dedicating this sacred structure some years after its initial use.

And now, my brothers and sisters, as we conclude this meeting, I invite all of you to join with me in bowing your heads and closing your eyes as we offer a prayer of rededication.

### Dedicatory prayer

O God, our Eternal Father, with bowed heads we come before Thee in reverence on this historic occasion. We are met in this great Tabernacle, now renovated and refurbished after more than a century of use.

Acting in the authority of the holy priesthood and in the name of Jesus Christ, we dedicate, rededicate, and consecrate this, the Salt Lake Tabernacle, to Thee and to Thy Beloved Son, that through many years yet to come it may serve as a place where Thy people may gather for many reasons.

As we contemplate this occasion, our thoughts return to the Prophet Joseph, who was an instrument in Thy hands in restoring the eternal gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ with all of the gifts and authority and blessings that accompany this.

We thank Thee for the great faith of our people who were driven from Nauvoo and who, with great suffering, including the death of many, crossed Iowa to establish Winter Quarters and subsequently undertook the long march which carried them from Winter Quarters to this valley of the Great Salt Lake.

We thank Thee for the inspired leadership of President Brigham Young, who, having never previously seen this valley, except in vision, led our people here. He knew very little about the area. He was

not familiar with the soil or the climate, the water or other features. In this desert place those pioneers plowed and planted, irrigated, cultivated, and harvested the fruits of their labors. They laid out a city, which has now become large with many hundreds of thousands of inhabitants.

At one time most of the Latter-day Saints lived here in this valley and in other surrounding areas where settlements were established. Now Thy work has grown and spread over the earth until we have more members outside of this nation than we have in it.

Dear Father, please continue to prosper Thy work. Cause it to increase and grow. Bless the people as they contribute of their tithes and offerings to make possible its growth and spread. May it go forth and fill the whole earth as the stone which was cut out of the mountain without hands was destined to roll forth and fill the earth. Wilt Thou raise up strong leaders through the generations to come, and may Thy people rejoice and find great happiness in their service in Thy work.

Accordingly, we dedicate, rededicate, and consecrate this sacred structure, and all of this we do and ask in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "The Spirit of God."

Elder R. Conrad Schultz offered the benediction.

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## GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 177th Annual General Conference, convened in the Conference Center at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 31, 2007. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by a priesthood choir from Brigham Young University.

Ronald Staheli directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you, brethren, to the general priesthood session of the 177th An-

nual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, Assembly Hall, BYU Marriott Center, Provo Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a priesthood choir from Brigham Young University, under the direction of Ronald Staheli, with John Longhurst at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing “Rise Up, O Men of God.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Wayne S. Peterson of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Rise Up, O Men of God.”

Elder Wayne S. Peterson offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

Thank you, Brother Peterson. The choir will now sing “Brightly Beams Our Father’s Mercy.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Joseph B. Wirthlin and Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. Following their remarks, we shall hear from Bishop Keith B. McMullin of the Presiding Bishopric.

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The choir sang “Brightly Beams Our Father’s Mercy.”

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## **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin**

### **Life-changing experiences during youth**

Lately I have reflected on many of the wonderful experiences I’ve had in my life. As I have expressed gratitude to my Heavenly Father for these marvelous blessings and opportunities, I have realized, perhaps more than ever before, how critical the formative years of my life were.

Many of the most important and life-changing moments of my life occurred when I was a young man. The lessons I learned then formed my character and shaped my destiny. Without them, I would be a very different man and in a very different place than I am today. This evening, I would like to talk for a few minutes about some of these experiences and what I learned from them.

### **“Keep your eye on the ball”**

I’ll never forget one high school football game against a rival school. I played

the wingback position, and my assignment was to either block the linebacker or try to get open so the quarterback could throw me the ball. The reason I remember this particular game so well is because the fellow on the other side of the line—the man I was supposed to block—was a giant.

I wasn’t exactly the tallest athlete in the world. But I think this other guy may have been. I remember looking up at him, thinking he probably weighed as much as two of me. Keep in mind, when I played we didn’t have the protective gear that players have today. My helmet was made of leather, and it didn’t have a face guard.

The more I thought about it, the more I came to a sobering realization: if I ever let him catch me, I could be cheering for my team the rest of the season from a hospital bed.

Lucky for me, I was fast. And for the better part of the first half, I managed to avoid him.



Except for one play.

Our quarterback dropped back to pass. I was open. He threw the ball, and it sailed toward me.

The only problem was that I could hear a lumbering gallop behind me. In a moment of clarity, I thought that if I caught the ball there was a distinct possibility I could be eating my meals through a tube. But the ball was heading for me, and my team was depending on me. So I reached out, and—at the last instant—I looked up.

And there he was.

I remember the ball hitting my hands. I remember struggling to hang on to it. I remember the sound of the ball falling to the turf. After that, I'm not exactly sure what happened, because the giant hit me so hard I wasn't sure what planet I was on. One thing I did remember was a deep voice coming from behind a dark haze: "Serves you right for being on the wrong team."

William McKinley Oswald was my high school football coach. He was a great coach and had a profound influence on my life. But I think he could have learned his method of motivating players from an army drill sergeant.

That day, during his halftime speech, Coach Oswald reminded the whole team about the pass I had dropped. Then he pointed right at me and said, "How could you do that?"

He wasn't speaking with his inside voice.

"I want to know what made you drop that pass."

I stammered for a moment and then finally decided to tell the truth. "I took my eye off the ball," I said.

The coach looked at me and said, "That's right; you took your eye off the ball. Don't ever do that again. That kind of mistake loses ball games."

I respected Coach Oswald, and in spite of how terrible I felt, I made up my mind to do what Coach said. I vowed to never take my eye off the ball again, even

if it meant getting pounded to Mongolia by the giant on the other side of the line.

We headed back onto the field and started the second half. It was a close game, and even though my team had played well, we were behind by four points late in the fourth quarter.

The quarterback called my number on the next play. I went out again, and again I was open. The ball headed toward me. But this time, the giant was in front of me and in perfect position to intercept the pass.

He reached up, but the ball sailed through his hands. I jumped high, never taking my eye off the ball, stabbed at it, and pulled it down for the game-winning touchdown.

I don't remember much about the celebration after, but I do remember the look on Coach Oswald's face.

"Way to keep your eye on the ball," he said.

I think I smiled for a week.

### **Working toward righteous goals**

I have known many great men and women. Although they have different backgrounds, talents, and perspectives, they all have this in common: they work diligently and persistently toward achieving their goals. It's easy to get distracted and lose focus on the things that are most important in life. I've tried to remember the lessons I learned from Coach Oswald and prioritize values that are important to me so that I can keep my eye focused on things that really matter.

I urge you to examine your life. Determine where you are and what you need to do to be the kind of person you want to be. Create inspiring, noble, and righteous goals that fire your imagination and create excitement in your heart. And then keep your eye on them. Work consistently toward achieving them.

"If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams," wrote Henry David

Thoreau, “and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.”<sup>1</sup>

In other words, never take your eye off the ball.

### **Avoiding temptations**

Another lesson I learned on the football field was at the bottom of a pile of 10 other players. It was the Rocky Mountain Conference championship game, and the play called for me to run the ball up the middle to score the go-ahead touchdown. I took the handoff and plunged into the line. I knew I was close to the goal line, but I didn’t know how close. Although I was pinned at the bottom of the pile, I reached my fingers forward a couple of inches and I could feel it. The goal line was two inches away.

At that moment I was tempted to push the ball forward. I could have done it. And when the refs finally pulled the players off the pile, I would have been a hero. No one would have ever known.

I had dreamed of this moment from the time I was a boy. And it was right there within my reach. But then I remembered the words of my mother. “Joseph,” she had often said to me, “do what is right, no matter the consequence. Do what is right and things will turn out OK.”

I wanted so desperately to score that touchdown. But more than being a hero in the eyes of my friends, I wanted to be a hero in the eyes of my mother. And so I left the ball where it was—two inches from the goal line.

I didn’t know it at the time, but this was a defining experience. Had I moved the ball, I could have been a champion for a moment, but the reward of temporary glory would have carried with it too steep and too lasting a price. It would have engraved upon my conscience a scar that would have stayed with me the remainder of my life. I knew I must do what is right.

The Light of Christ helps us to discern right from wrong. When we allow temptations to drown out the still voice of our conscience—that is when decisions become difficult.

My parents taught me to react quickly when temptation comes and to say “No!” instantly and emphatically. I recommend that same counsel to you. Avoid temptations.

### **The joy of service**

Another lesson I learned was the joy of service to others. I have spoken before of how my father, who was the bishop of our ward, had me load up my wagon and deliver needed food and supplies to the homes of those families who were in need. He wasn’t alone in his desire to reach out to those in distress.

Seventy-five years ago, Bishop William F. Perschon presided over the Fourth Ward of the Pioneer Stake in Salt Lake City. He was a German immigrant, a convert to the Church, and he spoke with a thick accent. He was a fine businessman, but what most distinguished him was his great compassion for others.

Each week during priesthood meeting, Bishop Perschon had the Aaronic Priesthood bearers recite the following phrase: “Priesthood means service; bearing the priesthood, I will serve.”

It wasn’t merely a slogan. When widows needed assistance, Bishop Perschon and the Aaronic Priesthood were there to help. When a chapel was being built, Bishop Perschon and the Aaronic Priesthood were there. When the sugar beets and potatoes at the welfare farm needed weeding or harvesting, Bishop Perschon and the Aaronic Priesthood were there.

Later, William Perschon served in the stake presidency, where he influenced a young bishop by the name of Thomas S. Monson. In the 1950s, Bishop Perschon was called to preside over the Swiss-Austrian Mission and played an instru-

mental role in building the first “overseas” temple, located in Bern, Switzerland.

You could scarcely think of Bishop Perschon without thinking of his concern and compassion for others and his untiring commitment to teach that same quality to others. Of the young men in the Aaronic Priesthood over whom he presided as bishop, 29 went on to become bishops themselves. Ten served in stake presidencies. Five became mission presidents, three accepted calls as temple presidents, and two served as General Authorities.<sup>2</sup>

That is the power of a great leader, brethren. That is the power of service.

Although I didn’t fully understand it at the time, it is clear to me now that these lessons—and many others I learned as a youth—served as the foundation upon which the rest of my life has been built.

### **An obedient spirit**

We all possess spiritual gifts. Some are blessed with the gift of faith, others the gift of healing. In the body of the Church, all of the spiritual gifts are present. In my case, perhaps one of the spiritual gifts for which I am most grateful is that I have been blessed with an obedient spirit. When I heard wise counsel from my parents or Church leaders, I listened and tried to make it part of my thoughts and actions.

Brethren of the priesthood, I urge you to cultivate the gift of an obedient spirit. The Savior taught that “whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man. . . . And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man.”<sup>3</sup>

How do we know if we are wise or foolish? When we hear inspired counsel, we obey. That is the test of wise or foolish.

What does it profit us if we listen to wise counsel and do not heed the words? Of what use is experience if we do not learn from it? What good are the scriptures if we do not cherish the words and incorporate them into our lives?

President Gordon B. Hinckley has promised that “[Heavenly Father] will shower down blessings upon those who walk in obedience to His commandments.”<sup>4</sup>

I add my voice to his.

I testify that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of all mankind. I testify that God is close at hand. He cares about us and loves us, His children. Prophets, seers, and revelators guide the progress of the restored Church of Jesus Christ. President Gordon B. Hinckley stands as a latter-day prophet to the Church and to the world.

I give thanks to my Creator for this wonderful life where each of us has the opportunity to learn lessons we could not fully comprehend by any other means.

My dear brethren, may we set righteous goals and work to achieve them, do what is right, and reach out in love to those around us. This is my prayer and testimony, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. *Walden* (1965), 240.
2. Letter from Elder Glen L. Rudd to President Thomas S. Monson, Feb. 5, 1987.
3. Matthew 7:24, 26.
4. In Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 95; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 71.

## **Elder Robert D. Hales**

What a joy to be in your presence, brethren, as you are gathered across this world. I am reminded of the words of the hymn: “Behold! A royal army, with banner,

sword, and shield, is marching forth to conquer on life’s great battlefield.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, you are the royal army of God, faithful and true.

## Message to the Aaronic Priesthood

Tonight I wish to speak to the youngest members of this royal army—the Aaronic Priesthood: deacons, teachers, and priests venturing forth upon the battlefield of life. Although you do not remember it, you enlisted in this cause with a single decision, made long ago in our premortal existence. There, in the Grand Council in Heaven, you decided to obey the will of your Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Remember this: you are a son of God who decided to follow the Savior when it mattered most, and that makes you a great man indeed.

Because of that divine decision which determined your eternal progression, you received a physical body, gained the agency to choose good over evil, and are now growing and preparing to take upon yourselves the attributes of our Savior. You have been baptized and have received the Holy Ghost. You are learning who you are, why you are here, and where you are going. And now you have received the Aaronic Priesthood!

The Aaronic Priesthood is the preparatory priesthood, given for this preparatory time in your life. *How* you bear that priesthood now will *prepare* you to make the most important decisions in the future. These decisions include receiving the Melchizedek Priesthood, going to the temple, serving a mission, getting an education, selecting an occupation, and choosing a companion and being sealed for time and for all eternity in the holy temple. There is a time and season for all of our decisions. Make sure you make decisions in the proper time and season. All of these life-altering decisions will be made in a very busy, relatively short period during your 20s—during what I call the “Decade of Decision.”

## The time for preparation

While training to be a jet fighter pilot, I prepared to make such vital decisions in a

flight simulator. For example, I practiced deciding when to bail out of an airplane if the fire warning light came on and I began to spin out of control. I remember one dear friend who didn’t make these preparations. He would find a way out of simulator training and then go to play golf or swim. He never learned his emergency procedures! A few months later, fire erupted in his plane, and it spun toward the ground in flames. Noting the fire warning light, his younger companion, having developed a preconditioned response, knew when to bail out of the plane and parachuted to safety. But my friend who had not prepared to make that decision stayed with the plane and died in the crash.

In the decade ahead, your time for preparation will be limited. As you are Aaronic Priesthood bearers, it is important that you prepare now. You must develop your own preconditioned responses for the important decisions you will make in the next decade of your life. You must know what to do and when to do it when each decision presents itself. Remember that making no decision at all could be just as deadly as making the wrong decision. Many of the decisions you make or don’t make will have eternal consequences.

## Now is the time

*Now is the time* to become a disciple of Jesus Christ, which means accepting His invitation to “come, follow me.”<sup>2</sup> This is the decision we made in our premortal lives. Now we must make it again here in mortality, every day, in every situation by taking the Savior’s name upon us, remembering His atoning sacrifice, and keeping His commandments. This we covenanted to do when we were baptized, and we have the opportunity to renew those covenants each week as we partake of the sacrament.

*Now is the time* to organize and prepare ourselves to have the Holy Ghost as our constant companion. This means doing what your parents and leaders have

taught you to do—study the scriptures; pray morning and night; keep a neat, well-groomed appearance; follow a schedule; set and achieve goals; be honest in your dealings; keep commitments; and be worthy of the priesthood you bear. Always, always live the standards, revealed by prophets, in the booklet *For the Strength of Youth*.

*Now is the time* to decide who your friends are and to become worthy of a righteous eternal companion. It is very simple, brethren. As my mother taught me, “Birds of a feather flock together.” Your peer group can inspire you to do great things or tempt you into strange and miserable paths. True friends make it easier to live the gospel. They never make us choose between their ways and the Lord’s ways. They help us be the kind of person that attracts other true friends. And they help us *become* the kind of person a righteous companion can choose to be with forever. If you want those kinds of friends, ask yourself: “Am I that kind of friend to others? Am I the kind of person I want my eternal companion to be?”

*Now is the time* to prepare for your mission. Depending upon your individual circumstance, you may be able to serve a full-time proselyting mission. While this is important, remember that even more important is going to the temple *on the way* to your mission. A mission is a priceless opportunity to keep temple covenants by living the law of consecration—giving all of your time, gifts, and talents to the Lord and serving Him with all your heart, might, mind, and strength. I have always felt that the two years you serve will be a tithing of time on the first 20 years of your life. But even if you are not able to serve a full-time mission, you can prepare for one day in the future, when the time is right, to go to the temple to make sacred covenants so that you can receive your eternal blessings.

*Now is the time* to prepare for training, education, and an occupation. As young men of the Aaronic Priesthood,

you are in the internship of life. Your diligence in school now will qualify you to keep President Hinckley’s counsel in the future—to get all of the education you can.<sup>3</sup> Decide now to do your best in school and at work. Then, when opportunities knock, you will be ready to open the door and take advantage of them. We should all remember: “To every man is given a gift.”<sup>4</sup> Develop your gifts and talents. Young men, prayerfully select classes, training programs, and jobs that will prepare you for greater opportunities and more responsibility in the future.

*Now is the time* to obey. In the premortal existence, ours was not a selective obedience. We did not pick and choose which parts of the eternal plan to follow. I learned that lesson on our first night flying solo in pilot training when all of us were given the instruction: “Don’t fly acrobatic patterns at night. You are beginning pilots without instrument flight training.” Some time later, an otherwise good pilot and a great friend chose to disobey that command. As he flew loops and barrel rolls through the night sky over Texas, he looked through the cockpit canopy and thought he saw stars above him, but he was really seeing the lights of oil rigs below. He was experiencing vertigo: the g-forces on his plane made it seem he was right side up, yet he was upside down. As he pulled up on the stick to climb higher into the night sky, he dove toward the earth and crashed into the twinkling lights of the oil field below.

When you are flying an airplane, if you change your position by just one degree at a time, your inner ear cannot detect the change. Brethren young and old, when we practice selective obedience, we change our position relative to the Lord—and usually by only one degree at a time. As the deceptive forces of the adversary work on us, we cannot detect them, and we experience spiritual vertigo. While it may *seem* like we are going in a safe direction, we are in fact headed for disaster. In the

preexistence, our decision to follow the Lord was all-or-nothing. Following that pattern through our mortal probation will get each of us back to our Heavenly Father.

*Now is the time* to use our time properly. “This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God.”<sup>5</sup> I testify that your time on earth will be sufficient if you learn to use it wisely in your youth. “O, remember, my son, and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God.”<sup>6</sup>

*Now is the time* to safeguard your birthright. Nearing the end of his life, the Old Testament prophet Jacob gave a father’s blessing to each of his sons. Reuben was the firstborn and had the birthright—special blessings intended just for him. But in his blessing to Reuben, his father said, “Thou art . . . unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.”<sup>7</sup> Think for a moment about what the phrase *unstable as water* means. When water gets hot, it evaporates. When it gets cold, it freezes. When it is unchanneled, it causes erosion and destroys whatever may be in its path.

As bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood, you too have a birthright. I challenge you to be obedient and strong. I challenge you not to let your resolve dribble out and your commitment to follow the Savior evaporate. Be firm as a rock in living the gospel. None of us know all the blessings that await us. The only way we lose those blessings is to give them up through disobedience. Don’t give up your eternal heritage for the things of this world. Let us be obedient and prepare now to honor, protect, and receive our glorious birthright.

### The law of the harvest

Young men, you are the vital strength of the Lord’s army, the stripling warriors of these latter days.<sup>8</sup> “Whatsoever ye sow, that shall ye also reap.”<sup>9</sup> Contemplating the glorious harvest ahead, I invite you to ponder how you will make decisions during the coming decade.

The law of the harvest offers a pattern for making decisions. Prepare the soil through prayer, knowing that you are a son of God. Plant the seeds by counseling with those who will give sound advice; then seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Let the seeds of inspiration grow. The budding ideas need tending. They need time to mature. The light of inspiration will bring the spiritual harvest which will come when we ask our Heavenly Father in prayer if we have made a correct decision. As we follow that light, the darkness will vanish and the light will grow “brighter and brighter until the perfect day”<sup>10</sup>—that day when we are in the presence of our Father in Heaven.

### Be there

Finally, *be there*. Each of us was *there* in the Council in Heaven to choose the great plan of happiness we now enjoy. Young men, when you have made a commitment to yourself, your family, your bishop, your employer, *be there*. When it is time to be in church, at Mutual, or fulfilling a priesthood assignment, *be there*. When it is time to graduate from school or training programs, *be there*. When it is time to serve a mission, *be there*. When the young woman you love most kneels at the altar of God’s holy temple, *be there* (and not as a witness). When your family is gathered in the celestial kingdom, *be there*. When the Savior waits to greet you as you return with honor from your life on this earth and your Heavenly Father wants to encircle you about in the arms of His love, *be there*.

After your decade of decision, go onward and upward. “Rise up, O [ye] men of God!”<sup>11</sup> Be faithful husbands and fathers. Be true. Rise up and be worthy of the worthy daughters of God who support and sustain us. May we honor them as we honor the Lord.

I testify that your Heavenly Father knows you are here tonight. You are part of His mighty, royal army whose “ranks

are filled with soldiers, united, bold, and strong, who follow their Commander and sing their joyful song: Victory, victory, thru him that redeemed us! Victory, victory, thru Jesus Christ, our Lord!”<sup>12</sup> He is there, He wants us to be with Him, He leads us, and our victory is in Him, I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. “Behold! A Royal Army,” *Hymns*, no. 251.

2. Luke 18:22.
3. See “A Prophet’s Counsel and Prayer for Youth,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 2–11.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 46:11.
5. Alma 34:32.
6. Alma 37:35.
7. Genesis 49:3–4.
8. See Alma 53.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 6:33.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 50:24.
11. *Hymns*, no. 323.
12. *Hymns*, no. 251.

## Bishop Keith B. McMullin

### You are in charge of your world

My dear brethren, how blessed we are to be assembled together with the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles. Each priesthood bearer present, be he 12 or 112, can, because of our Savior Jesus Christ, inherit the celestial order of life “by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.”<sup>1</sup> This is wonderful to contemplate, and I know it is true. You are in charge of your world!

With this prospect before us, consider the following story. A young man, full of ambition and energy, enrolled in a fine university. At the time, he was a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood. His goal was lofty—he wanted to become a doctor. His aim was ambitious—he wanted to be rich. He wanted to play football, so he sought out the coaches and eventually made the team. Now he could have the recognition and bragging rights unique in the world of university sports. Such were the notions in his head.

But he had given little thought to something that would ultimately dismantle his lofty and vain ambitions—he had failed to lay up in store. He had overlooked the importance of adequate preparation, the requirements of regular attendance and disciplined study, and the college chem-

istry class. The consequence was swift and merciless. It took less than 90 days. It happened this way:

The day he found his 5-foot 8-inch, 170-pound body on the line of scrimmage opposite a mammoth lineman from the varsity squad, he knew he was in the wrong sport.

Unaccustomed to rigorous study, his eyes and mind refused to function after a brief time in the books.

The capstone of defeat was the final chemistry exam. Suffice it to say that his random answers to multiple-choice questions did not even approximate the law of averages. He failed miserably.

Hard work, a mission that awakened in him a correct vision of life’s purposes, and unrelenting preparation eventually overcame the consequence of this brief period of foolishness. Even today, however, I still have nightmares about that chemistry class.

Fortunately, the Lord has shown us how to avoid similar foolishness. He said:

“Hearken, O ye people of my church. . . . Hearken ye people from afar; and ye that are upon the islands of the sea, listen together. . . .

“Prepare ye, prepare ye for that which is to come, for the Lord is nigh.”<sup>2</sup>

### **“If ye are prepared ye shall not fear”**

The doctrine of the Second Coming of the Messiah provides one of the great incentives to prepare and live right. Heavenly Father knows that promised rewards encourage His children to do works of righteousness and promised penalties create a dread of doing evil. Such are the revelations pertaining to the Second Coming of our Lord.<sup>3</sup>

These revelations speak of signs and wonders on earth and in the heavens. They point to troublesome times and pending events vast in scope and duration. And most important, we receive these supernal promises:

“The Lord shall have power over his saints, and shall reign in their midst.”<sup>4</sup>

“Through my providence, notwithstanding the tribulation which shall descend upon you, . . . the church may stand independent above all other creatures beneath the celestial world.”<sup>5</sup>

And “if ye are prepared ye shall not fear.”<sup>6</sup>

Priesthood bearers are led by these promises to prepare themselves and their families for the Lord’s appearing.<sup>7</sup> There is no need to be anxious about events leading up to the Second Coming. Let us instead be filled with gratitude for our understanding of what lies ahead. Let us appreciate that we are in charge of our own world, being the Lord’s agents over that which He has entrusted to us.<sup>8</sup> The formula is simple: Be faithful. Unencumber your life. Lay up in store.

*Be faithful.* As priesthood bearers, we cultivate a gentle touch and kindly word. We are men who pray, who keep the Sabbath day holy, and who know the word of God. We tithe, fast, and give a generous fast offering. We keep our covenants and consecrate our lives to the building up of God’s kingdom.

And, brethren, we *lay up in store!* As we do these things, “the Lord shall have power over his saints, and shall reign in [our] midst.”<sup>9</sup>

*Unencumber your life.* As men of God, we turn from excess to that which edifies, for “that which doth not edify is not of God.”<sup>10</sup> If dealings or involvements or pursuits or schedules detract from putting God first, we must pare back and unencumber our lives.<sup>11</sup> If we have debts, we pay them and live debt free to the extent possible.

And, brethren, we *lay up in store!* Then, “through [the Lord’s] providence, notwithstanding the tribulation . . . the church [and its people will] stand independent.”<sup>12</sup>

*Lay up in store.* Wives are instrumental in this work, but they need husbands who lead out in family preparedness. Children need parents who instill in them this righteous tradition. They will then do likewise with their children, and their stores will not fail.

A cardinal principle of the gospel is to prepare for the day of scarcity. Work, industry, frugality are part of the royal order of life. Remember these words from Paul: “If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Counsel from the First Presidency**

Seated before us are the three presiding high priests who constitute the First Presidency of the Church.

From President James E. Faust, Second Counselor, we hear: “Every father and mother are the family’s storekeepers. They should store whatever their own family would like to have in the case of an emergency . . . [and] God will sustain us through our trials.”<sup>14</sup>

From President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor, we hear: “Many more people could ride out the storm-tossed waves in their economic lives if they had their year’s supply of food . . . and were debt-free. Today we find that many have followed this counsel in reverse: they have



at least a year's supply of debt and are food-free."<sup>15</sup>

From President Gordon B. Hinckley, the Lord's prophet, we hear:

"The best place to have some food set aside is within our homes. . . .

"We can begin ever so modestly. We can begin with a one week's food supply and gradually build it to a month and then to three months. . . . I fear that so many feel that a long-term food supply is so far beyond their reach that they make no effort at all.

"Begin in a small way . . . and gradually build toward a reasonable objective."<sup>16</sup>

### Members should begin to store and save

Inspired preparation rests on the foundation of faith in Jesus Christ, obedience, and a provident lifestyle. Members should not go to extremes, but they should begin.

We call upon priesthood bearers to store sufficient so that you and your family can weather the vicissitudes of life. Please see to it that those entrusted to your watchcare receive these two pamphlets entitled *All Is Safely Gathered In*. Exhort them to prepare now for rainy days ahead.

Priesthood leaders, enlist the Relief Society in promoting family preparedness and homemaking. The women of the Church need your backing and will respond to your leadership.

Encourage our members to regularly put into their home storage a few wholesome, basic food items and some water that is safe to drink. They should save some money, if only a few coins each week. This modest approach will soon enable them to have several months' reserve. Over time they can expand these modest efforts into a longer-term supply by adding such essentials as grains, legumes, and other staples that will keep them alive in case they do not have anything else to eat.<sup>17</sup>

As we do our very best, we can be confident that "the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail."<sup>18</sup>

We shall enjoy greater wisdom, security, peace of mind, and personal well-being. We shall be prepared, and because we are prepared, we "shall not fear."<sup>19</sup>

### One family's preparation

In closing, I introduce to you the Luca and Patrizia Vaccarone family. They live in a small town near Rome, Italy. In a recent letter, they wrote:

"We decided after some experience that it is important to store the items we use. Sometimes we have to modify our habits in eating certain kinds of foods. . . .

"The feeling of peace and the desire to be faithful to the commandment given by the Lord through the modern prophet helps us feel the Holy Spirit, . . . to not be afraid, and to see that the signs of the time for the Second Coming of the Lord is a blessing and not something to fear. We rejoice in it. . . . It gives us the motivation to be faithful and endure to the end and to be saved and obtain eternal life."

As a final thought, Brother Vaccarone writes: "I'm sorry for my English. I hope you understand what I tried to explain to you."<sup>20</sup>

Brother and Sister Vaccarone, we understand, for it is written in scripture: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."<sup>21</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Articles of Faith 1:3.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 1:1, 12.
3. See Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. (1966-73), 1:677-78.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 1:36.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 78:14.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 38:30.
7. See 2 Timothy 4:8; Doctrine and Covenants 133:50, 52.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 104:13-17.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 1:36.

10. Doctrine and Covenants 50:23.
11. See *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:675–76; Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 78:14.
13. 1 Timothy 5:8; see also 1 Timothy 6:19; Doctrine and Covenants 29:34; “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102; Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, Oct. 1900, 46; Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 4 vols. (1979–81), 2:155.
14. In Conference Report, Apr. 1986, 26; or *Ensign*, May 1986, 22.
15. “That Noble Gift—Love at Home,” *Church News*, May 12, 2001, 7.
16. In Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 65; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 58.

17. See *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1996), 314.
18. 1 Kings 17:14; see also vv. 8–16.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 38:30.
20. Letter dated Mar. 3, 2007.
21. Proverbs 3:5–6.

### President Monson

Thank you, brethren. The choir and congregation will now sing “Now Let Us Rejoice.” President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will then address us, and following his remarks, it will be my privilege to speak to you.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Now Let Us Rejoice.”

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## President James E. Faust

### A message for young priesthood holders

Brethren, tonight I would like to talk to you as I would to my grandsons. I hope that what I have to say will apply to all young priesthood holders everywhere. As I think of this large congregation and also the many thousands more who have joined us by satellite, I am reminded that the great blessing of holding the priesthood of God is one that is reserved for the relatively few, considering the billions of people in the world. To hold the priesthood is a signal honor; yet any worthy man or boy over the age of 12 in the Church may receive it.

Priesthood is the authority delegated to man to minister in the name of God. It is a power that no one can assume on his own initiative. As Paul said, “No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”<sup>1</sup> It is an authority beyond all human power to create.

### The reality of priesthood power

Peter, a young priest, wrote of an experience that taught him that priesthood

power is very real. A young convert in his ward in Ontario, Canada, was sustained as a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood, and Peter was asked to be the “voice” in the ordination. Peter wrote: “I had never laid my hands on anybody’s head before, and I felt so inadequate. But then the Spirit reassured me that it would be fine for me to do it. . . .

“The young man to be ordained sat down in the chair, and I stood directly behind him. [Our Young Men president] guided me through the ordinance prayer and I repeated every word he said. After we had finished the ordination and said, ‘. . . and we wish to pronounce a blessing on your head at this time . . .’ [the Young Men president] looked at me and indicated that I was on my own.

“At that point, the priesthood entirely changed its meaning for me. It was no longer just a title, but the actual authority to act in God’s name, and I was giving that authority to someone else. I paused and waited for the Spirit to whisper to me what I was to say. It is difficult for me to

describe the feelings I had that day during the blessing, but I can say that I now have a stronger testimony that the power of the priesthood is real.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Becoming a man of God**

You young men are no doubt looking forward to receiving the higher or Melchizedek Priesthood. Of this higher priesthood the Prophet Joseph Smith said, “Its institution was prior to ‘the foundation of this earth, or the morning stars sang together, or the Sons of God shouted for joy,’ and is the highest and holiest Priesthood, and is after the order of the Son of God.”<sup>3</sup>

As priesthood holders we are agents of the Lord. The Lord spoke of this sacred agency to the elders of the Church in Kirtland in 1831: “Wherefore, as ye are agents, ye are on the Lord’s errand; and whatever ye do according to the will of the Lord is the Lord’s business.”<sup>4</sup>

President Hinckley has often reminded us that missionary work is essentially a priesthood responsibility. It is a great honor and responsibility to be called to serve the Lord in missionary work. This service brings lasting joy, even though it also can be challenging and discouraging at times. My mission changed the course of my life. It was one of the greatest experiences I have ever had. Serving a mission prepares us for the rest of our life’s work and our eternal work.

I hope each one of you becomes a man of God. You will become a man of God through righteous works. You will honor and magnify your priesthood and, as the Apostle Paul said, “follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Guarding against all forms of evil**

It is not always easy to follow a righteous plan and be obedient to the laws of society and the laws of the Lord. In the long run, however, following the rules is

still the best pathway to obtaining all the things the Lord has promised.

We are all accountable for our actions. My experience as a lawyer taught me that those who follow a life of crime frequently blame their father or mother or society when they are imprisoned. Yet they willfully chose to act “contrary to the nature of God” and consequently are “in a state contrary to the nature of happiness.”<sup>6</sup> Some of them even claim, “The devil made me do it!” The truth in that statement is that the devil entices us to do evil.<sup>7</sup> The falsehood is because we have agency. The devil can’t make us do anything we choose not to do.<sup>8</sup>

Snares and pitfalls can come to all of us, whether in our youth, middle age, or old age. As someone once observed, “In youth we run into difficulties, in old age difficulties run into us.”<sup>9</sup> The increased permissiveness of our society will require us to hold very tightly to the iron rod of righteousness in order to receive the blessings and protection of the Lord. There is great danger in trifling with Satan’s temptations. We will need to guard against all forms of evil all of the days of our lives.

All you young men who hold the priesthood have the duty to respect womanhood. As you date the lovely young women of the Church, you have a duty to protect their physical safety and virtue. The priesthood you hold gives you the greater responsibility to see that the high moral standards of the Church are always maintained. You know better than to approach the edge of sexual enticement. You will lose part of that which is sacred about yourself if you go beyond the edge and abuse the great powers of procreation. How can any of us hope to play a great role in time or eternity if we have no power of self-control? To be married to a righteous woman who loves the Lord, loves you, and respects the priesthood is one of the greatest of blessings of life and eternity. I have learned this from over 60 years of marriage to my wife, Ruth.

## Importance of family life

Friends and acquaintances add much to the richness of life, but these relationships can be temporary. No one loves you more or has greater concern for your welfare than your parents. You may question what they tell you, but you cannot question their love for you and interest in your well-being.

The time will come when you young men will have the responsibility of caring for a wife and children, who will depend upon you. When you marry, you will be responsible for your wife's welfare and ultimately for the welfare of your children as you start a family. Marriage and fatherhood can bring great eternal happiness and joy. As President Joseph F. Smith said, it is "family life, on which the government of the Church is based and perpetuated."<sup>10</sup> To find sublime fulfillment in the home, both partners need to be fully committed to the marriage. President David O. McKay once said, "When one puts business or pleasure above his home, he that moment starts on the downgrade to soul-weakness."<sup>11</sup>

## Get training and education

Some of you are well on your way to successfully meeting some of your goals in life. We are proud of you. My father once told me that he thought he would have it made when he graduated from law school. He said that really in a sense his graduation was only the beginning of greater challenges. We do not have it made, nor will we be free from worldly challenges in this life.

We live in an age of specialization. When I was a boy, many people had Model T Fords. Compared to modern cars, they were relatively simple mechanically. Many people were able to fix their own cars by grinding the valves, changing the rings on the pistons, putting in new brake bands, and using a generous supply of baling wire. Nowadays automobiles are

so sophisticated that the average person knows very little about how to repair them. The mechanics of today use a computer to diagnose engine problems. I mention this example to encourage you young men to get training and education in order to keep up. Technical education is very important, and the same thing is true in fields of higher education. Any kind of skill requires specialized learning.

## "Seek ye first the kingdom of God"

I do not care what vocation you choose to follow in life so long as it is honorable. How you provide for your family is your decision. Acquiring a skill is a good way to pay the bills, but there really ought to be something more in terms of personal involvement. Do not become so preoccupied with the material things of life that you lose the essence of your humanity. You may recall Dickens's character Jacob Marley, who lamented his obsession with work when he exclaimed: "Business? . . . Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business." <sup>12</sup> Each of us ought to play some role in strengthening society, especially in doing the work of God.

I have learned that for those of us who hold the priesthood, the best formula for success is "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."<sup>13</sup> Success will not come immediately, because it requires preparation and hard work. There really are no shortcuts to success.

## Increasing our talents and using them

Each of us is a unique creation of our Heavenly Father. No two of us are completely alike. No one else has exactly the same gifts and talents that we have been given. We should increase those talents and gifts and use them to leverage our uniqueness. For example, when I was growing up, there was a fine young man in our neighborhood who was not a scholar

but made beautiful furniture with his hands. He and I were drafted into the military the same day. He could not learn to make his bed so it would pass inspection, but he could make pieces of wood into exquisite art. As President Howard W. Hunter said: "Some persons have the idea that talent, creativity, moral stability, or greatness are not in the realm of youth, but are reserved to those who are older. This is not so."<sup>14</sup>

You young men have a future with great promise. You are the beneficiaries of knowledge the world has never known before. This knowledge will allow you to contribute to the future of modern business, industry, agriculture, and the professions. You may be among those who will defend a way of life on the battlefields. You will be among those who spread the principles of the gospel in the world and help the Church grow.

### **Go forward in faith and righteousness**

Now, my dear grandsons and all special young men within the sound of my voice, go forward. Go forward in faith and righteousness, following the leadership of our prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. If you do, the Lord will strengthen and magnify you so that you will accom-

plish great things. I testify of the great and profound influence the priesthood has been in my life. In all my long years of life I have tried not to hide who I am and what I believe. I cannot recall a single instance when it hurt my career or I lost valued friends by humbly acknowledging that I was a member of this Church. I leave my testimony and blessing with you today in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Hebrews 5:4.
2. Peter Pomart, "The Power Is Real," *New Era*, Oct. 1996, 10.
3. *History of the Church*, 4:207.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 64:29.
5. 1 Timothy 6:11.
6. Alma 41:11.
7. See Moroni 7:12.
8. See James 1:12–15; 4:7.
9. Josh Billings, in Evan Esar, ed., *The Dictionary of Humorous Quotations* (1949), 35.
10. "Parents Should Be Consulted," *Improvement Era*, Feb. 1902, 308–9.
11. In Conference Report, Apr. 1964, 5.
12. Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*, in *The Best Short Stories of Charles Dickens* (1947), 435.
13. Matthew 6:33.
14. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1997), 117.

## **President Thomas S. Monson**

Brethren, we are assembled this evening as a mighty body of the priesthood, both here in the Conference Center and in locations throughout the world. I am honored by the privilege to speak to you. I pray that the inspiration of the Lord will guide my thoughts and inspire my words.

### **The gift of the priesthood**

During the past several weeks, as I have contemplated what I might say to you tonight, I have thought repeatedly of the

blessing which is ours to be bearers of the sacred priesthood of God. When we look at the world as a whole, with a population of over six and a half billion people, we realize that we comprise a very small, select group. We who hold the priesthood are, in the words of the Apostle Peter, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood."<sup>1</sup>

President Joseph F. Smith defined the priesthood as "the power of God delegated to man by which man can act in the earth for the salvation of the human family, . . . by which [men] may speak the will of

God as if the angels were here to speak it themselves; by which men are empowered to bind on earth and it shall be bound in heaven, and to loose on earth and it shall be loosed in heaven.” President Smith added, “[The priesthood] is sacred, and it must be held sacred by the people.”<sup>2</sup>

My brethren, the priesthood is a gift which brings with it not only special blessings but also solemn responsibilities. It is our responsibility to conduct our lives so that we are ever worthy of the priesthood we bear. We live in a time when we are surrounded by much that is intended to entice us into paths which may lead to our destruction. To avoid such paths requires determination and courage.

### **The call for courage**

Courage counts. This truth came to me in a most vivid and dramatic manner many years ago. I was serving as a bishop at the time. The general session of our stake conference was being held in the Assembly Hall on Temple Square in Salt Lake City. Our stake presidency was to be reorganized. The Aaronic Priesthood, including members of bishoprics, were providing the music for the conference. As we concluded singing our first selection, President Joseph Fielding Smith, our conference visitor, stepped to the pulpit and read for sustaining approval the names of the new stake presidency. He then mentioned that Percy Fetzer, who became our new stake president, and John Burt, who became the first counselor—each of whom had been counselors in the previous presidency—had been made aware of their new callings before the conference began. However, he indicated that I, who had been called to be second counselor in the new presidency, had no previous knowledge of the calling and was hearing of it for the first time as my name was read for sustaining vote. He then announced, “If Brother Monson is willing to respond to this call, we will be pleased to hear from him now.”

As I stood at the pulpit and gazed out on that sea of faces, I remembered the song we had just sung. It pertained to the Word of Wisdom and was titled “Have Courage, My Boy, to Say No.” That day I selected as my acceptance theme “Have Courage, My Boy, to Say Yes.” The call for courage comes constantly to each of us—the courage to stand firm for our convictions, the courage to fulfill our responsibilities, the courage to honor our priesthood.

### **Living worthy to bear the priesthood**

Wherever we go, our priesthood goes with us. Are we standing in “holy places”?<sup>3</sup> Said President J. Reuben Clark Jr., who served for many years as a counselor in the First Presidency: “The Priesthood is not like a suit of clothes that you can lay off and take back on. . . . Depending upon ourselves [it is] an everlasting endowment.” He continued: “If we really had that . . . conviction . . . that we could not lay [the priesthood] aside, and that God would hold us responsible if we [de-meant] it, it would save us from doing a good many things, save us from going a good many places. If, every time we started a little detour away from the straight and narrow, we would remember, ‘I am carrying my Priesthood here. Should I?’ it would not take us long to work back into the straight and narrow.”<sup>4</sup>

President Spencer W. Kimball said: “There is no limit to the power of the priesthood which you hold. The limit comes in you if you do not live in harmony with the Spirit of the Lord and you limit yourselves in the power you exert.”<sup>5</sup>

My brethren of the priesthood—from the youngest to the oldest—are you living your life in accordance with that which the Lord requires? Are you worthy to bear the priesthood of God? If you are not, make the decision here and now, muster the courage it will take, and institute whatever changes are necessary so that

your life is what it should be. To sail safely the seas of mortality, we need the guidance of that eternal mariner—even the great Jehovah. If we are on the Lord's errand, we are entitled to the Lord's help.

### **A request for a blessing**

His help has come to me on countless occasions throughout my life. During the final phases of World War II, I turned 18 and was ordained an elder—one week before I departed for active duty with the navy. A member of my ward bishopric was at the train station to bid me farewell. Just before train time, he placed in my hand a book which I hold before you tonight. Its title: *The Missionary's Hand Book*. I laughed and commented, "I'll be in the navy—not on a mission." He answered, "Take it anyway. It may come in handy."

It did. During basic training our company commander instructed us concerning how we might best pack our clothing in a large seabag. He then advised, "If you have a hard, rectangular object you can place in the bottom of the bag, your clothes will stay more firm." I thought, "Where am I going to find a hard, rectangular object?" Suddenly I remembered just the right rectangular object—*The Missionary's Hand Book*. And thus it served for 12 weeks at the bottom of that seabag.

The night preceding our Christmas leave, our thoughts were, as always, on home. The barracks were quiet. Suddenly I became aware that my buddy in the adjoining bunk—a member of the Church, Leland Merrill—was moaning in pain. I asked, "What's the matter, Merrill?"

He replied, "I'm sick. I'm really sick."

I advised him to go to the base dispensary, but he answered knowingly that such a course would prevent him from being home for Christmas. I then suggested he be quiet so that we didn't awaken the entire barracks.

The hours lengthened; his groans grew louder. Then, in desperation, he whis-

pered, "Monson, aren't you an elder?" I acknowledged this to be so, whereupon he pleaded, "Give me a blessing."

I became very much aware that I had never given a blessing. I had never received such a blessing; I had never witnessed a blessing being given. My prayer to God was a plea for help. The answer came: "Look in the bottom of the seabag." Thus, at 2:00 a.m. I emptied on the deck the contents of the bag. I then took to the night-light that hard, rectangular object, *The Missionary's Hand Book*, and read how one blesses the sick. With about 120 curious sailors looking on, I proceeded with the blessing. Before I could stow my gear, Leland Merrill was sleeping like a child.

The next morning, Merrill smilingly turned to me and said, "Monson, I'm glad you hold the priesthood!" His gladness was only surpassed by my gratitude—gratitude not only for the priesthood but for being worthy to receive the help I required in a time of desperate need and to exercise the power of the priesthood.

### **Visit to a dying father**

Brethren, our Lord and Savior said, "Come, follow me."<sup>6</sup> When we accept His invitation and walk in His footsteps, He will direct our paths.

In April of 2000, I felt such direction. I had received a phone call from Rosa Salas Gifford, whom I did not know. She explained that her parents had been visiting from Costa Rica for a few months and that just a week prior to her call, her father, Bernardo Augusto Salas, had been diagnosed with liver cancer. She indicated that the doctors had informed the family that her father would live just a few more days. Her father's great desire, she explained, was to meet me before he died. She left her address and asked if I could come to her home in Salt Lake City to visit with her father.

Because of meetings and obligations, it was rather late when I left my office.

Instead of going straight home, however, I felt impressed that I should drive further south and visit Brother Salas that very evening. With the address in hand, I attempted to locate the residence. In rather heavy traffic and with dimming light, I drove past the location where the road to the house should have been. I could see nothing. However, I don't give up easily. I drove around the block and came back. Still nothing. One more time I tried and still no sign of the road.

I began to feel that I would be justified in turning toward home. I had made a gallant effort but had been unsuccessful in finding the address. Instead, I offered a silent prayer for help. The inspiration came that I should approach the area from the opposite direction. I drove a distance and turned the car around so that I was now on the other side of the road. Going in this direction, the traffic was much lighter. As I neared the location once again, I could see, through the faint light, a street sign that had been knocked down—it was lying on its side at the edge of the road—and a nearly invisible, weed-covered track leading to a small apartment building and a single, tiny residence some distance from the main road. As I drove toward the buildings, a small girl in a white dress waved to me, and I knew that I had found the family.

I was ushered into the home and then to the room where Brother Salas lay. Surrounding the bed were three daughters and a son-in-law, as well as Sister Salas. All but the son-in-law were from Costa Rica. Brother Salas's appearance reflected the gravity of his condition. A damp rag with frayed edges—not a towel or a washcloth but a damp rag with frayed edges—rested upon his forehead, emphasizing the humble economic circumstances of the family.

With some prompting, Brother Salas opened his eyes, and a wan smile graced his lips as I took him by the hand. I spoke the words, "I have come to meet you." Tears welled up in his eyes and in mine.

I asked if a blessing would be desired, and the unanimous answer from the family members was affirmative. Since the son-in-law did not hold the priesthood, I proceeded by myself to provide a priesthood blessing. The words seemed to flow freely under the direction of the Spirit of the Lord. I included the Savior's words found in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 84, verse 88: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up." Following the blessing, I offered a few words of comfort to the grieving family members. I spoke carefully so they could understand my English. And then, with my limited Spanish language ability, I let them know that I loved them and that our Heavenly Father would bless them.

I asked for the family Bible and directed their attention to 3 John, verse 4: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." I said to them, "This is what your husband and father would have you remember as he prepares to depart this earthly existence."

With tears streaming down her face, Brother Salas's sweet wife then asked if I would write down the references for the two scriptures I had shared with them so that the family might read them again. Not having anything handy on which I could write, Sister Salas reached into her purse and drew from it a slip of paper. As I took it from her, I noticed it was a tithing receipt. My heart was touched as I realized that, despite the extremely humble circumstances in which the family lived, they were faithful in paying their tithes.

After a tender farewell, I was escorted to my car. As I drove homeward, I reflected on the special spirit we had felt. I experienced, as well, as I have many times before, a sense of gratitude that my Heavenly Father had answered another person's prayer through me.



## Honoring the priesthood

My brethren, let us ever remember that the priesthood of God which we bear is a sacred gift which brings to us and to those we serve the blessings of heaven. May we, in whatever place we may be, honor and protect that priesthood. May we ever be on the Lord's errand, that we might ever be entitled to the Lord's help.

There is a war being waged for men's souls—yours and mine. It continues without abatement. Like a clarion call comes the word of the Lord to you and to me and to priesthood holders everywhere: "Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence."<sup>7</sup>

May we each have the courage to do so, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. 1 Peter 2:9.
2. *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 139–40.

3. Doctrine and Covenants 45:32; 87:8; 101:22.
4. In Conference Report, Oct. 1951, 169.
5. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 498.
6. Luke 18:22.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 107:99.

## President Monson

We remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. mountain daylight time tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

We express appreciation to the priesthood choir from Brigham Young University for the beautiful music they provided this evening.

Our concluding speaker at this session will be President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "I Love the Lord." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Paul V. Johnson of the Seventy.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brethren of the priesthood, what an inspiration it is to look into the faces of the 21,000 here in the Conference Center, with the knowledge that millions are gathered in church halls and other locations throughout the world. I regret that I am so old at a time when life is increasingly exciting.

## Developments in the Church

As all of you know, I was ordained and set apart as President of the Church 12 years ago, specifically on March 12, 1995. Elder Ballard has pulled together some figures concerning those 12 years. I quote from his statement:

- 387,750 missionaries have entered the mission field, which represents almost 40 percent of the missionaries who have

ever served in this dispensation—that is, 40 percent in the 12 most recent years of the 177 years since the Church was organized.

- 3,400,000 converts have been baptized, which is the equivalent of over one-fourth of the total current membership of the Church.

- The total number of missions in the Church has increased from 303 to 344, with three more to be added soon.

- Retention as measured by sacrament meeting attendance, priesthood ordinations, and tithing faithfulness has increased significantly.

Now, while all of this has been tremendously significant, I am convinced that with a little more dedication this wonderful recent past can be but prologue to a greater future.

Let us all put our shoulders to the wheel and push along, do our duty with a heart full of song. This cause needs work; let no one shirk. Put your shoulder to the wheel and push along. (See “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel,” *Hymns*, no. 252.)

### Joseph F. Smith’s dream

Now, I wish to move to a different matter. I spoke of this same thing many years ago. I repeat it because those who heard it then have long since forgotten, and those who did not hear it need to hear it. It concerns President Joseph F. Smith, who served as President of the Church from 1901 to 1918, altogether 17 years.

Joseph F. Smith was the son of Hyrum Smith, who was the brother of the Prophet Joseph and was martyred with him in Carthage. Joseph F. was born at Far West, Missouri, on November 13, 1838. He came out of Missouri as an infant. As a lad not yet six years of age, he heard a knock on the window of his mother’s home in Nauvoo. It was a man who had hurriedly ridden from Carthage and who told Sister Smith that her husband had been killed that afternoon.

When he was nine, he drove an ox team with his mother across the plains to this valley. At the age of 15 he was called on a mission to Hawaii. He made his way to San Francisco and there worked in a shingle mill to earn enough money to buy passage to the islands.

Hawaii was not a tourist center then. It was populated by the native Hawaiians, who were, for the most part, poor but generous with what they had. He learned to speak their language and to love them. While serving there he experienced a remarkable dream. I quote from his narrative concerning this. Said he:

“I was very much oppressed [when I was] on a mission. I was almost naked and entirely friendless, except [for] the friendship of a poor, benighted . . . people. I felt as if I was so debased in my condition of

poverty, lack of intelligence and knowledge, just a boy, that I hardly dared look a . . . man in the face.

“While in that condition I dreamed [one night] that I was on a journey, and I was impressed that I ought to hurry—hurry with all my might, for fear I might be too late. I rushed on my way as fast as I possibly could, and I was only conscious of having just a little bundle, a handkerchief with a small bundle wrapped in it. I did not realize . . . what it was, when I was hurrying as fast as I could; but finally I came to a wonderful mansion. . . . I thought I knew that was my destination. As I passed towards it, as fast as I could, I saw a notice [which read *B-A-T-H*], ‘Bath.’ I turned aside quickly and went into the bath and washed myself clean. I opened up this little bundle that I had, and there was [some] white, clean [clothing], a thing I had not seen for a long time, because the people I was with did not think very much of making things exceedingly clean. But my [clothing was] clean, and I put [it] on. Then I rushed to what appeared to be a great opening, or door. I knocked and the door opened, and the man who stood there was the Prophet Joseph Smith. He looked at me a little reprovingly, and the first words he said: ‘Joseph, you are late.’ Yet I took confidence and [replied]:

“‘Yes, but I am clean—I am clean!’

“He clasped my hand and drew me in, then closed the great door. I felt his hand just as tangible as I ever felt the hand of man. I knew him, and when I entered I saw my father, and Brigham [Young] and Heber [C. Kimball], and Willard [Richards], and other good men that I had known, standing in a row. I looked as if it were across this valley, and it seemed to be filled with a vast multitude of people, but on the stage were all the people that I had known. My mother was there, and she sat with a child in her lap; and I could name over as many as I remember of their names, who sat there, who seemed to be among the chosen, among the exalted. . . .

“[When I had this dream,] I was alone on a mat, away up in the mountains of Hawaii—no one was with me. But in this vision I pressed my hand up against the Prophet, and I saw a smile cross his countenance. . . .

“When I awoke that morning I was a man, although only [still] a boy. There was not anything in the world that I feared [after that]. I could meet any man or woman or child and look them in the face, feeling in my soul that I was a man every whit. That vision, that manifestation and witness that I enjoyed at that time has made me what I am, if I am anything that is good, or clean, or upright before the Lord, if there is anything good in me. That has helped me out in every trial and through every difficulty” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 542–43).

### “I am clean”

The core of that meaningful dream is found in the reproof given by Joseph Smith to young Joseph F. Said the Prophet, “Joseph, you are late.”

Replied Joseph F., “Yes, but I am clean—I am clean!”

The result of that dream was that a boy was changed into a man. His declaration “I am clean” gave him self-assurance and courage in facing anyone or any situation. He received the strength that comes from a clear conscience fortified by the approbation of the Prophet Joseph.

This prophetic dream holds something for every man and boy assembled in this vast congregation tonight. It is an old saying among us that “cleanliness is next to godliness.”

Said Isaiah the prophet:

“Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

“Learn to do well; . . .

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;

though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:16–18).

In modern revelation the Lord has said: “Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord” (D&C 133:5).

### Be clean

In a world that wallows in filth, be clean—in language, in thought, in body, in dress.

#### *In language*

To each of you I say, be clean in your language. There is so much of filthy, sleazy talk these days. Failure to express yourself in language that is clean marks you as one whose vocabulary is extremely limited. When Jehovah wrote on the tablets of stone, He said to the children of Israel, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Exodus 20:7).

The Lord has reinforced that commandment in words of modern revelation: “Remember that that which cometh from above is sacred, and must be spoken with care, and by constraint of the Spirit” (D&C 63:64).

#### *In thought*

Be clean in thought. Said the Lord, “Let all things be done in cleanliness before me” (D&C 42:41).

A filthy mind expresses itself in filthy and profane language. A clean mind expresses itself in language that is positive and uplifting and in deeds that bring happiness to the heart.

#### *In body, dress, and manner*

Be clean in body and dress and manner. Do not permit yourself to be tattooed. If you do, someday you will regret it. Only a painful and costly procedure can remove the tattoo.

Be clean and neat and orderly. Sloppy dress leads to sloppy manners. I am not so concerned about what you wear as I am that it be neat and clean. Remember Joseph F. Smith's dream. As he was hurrying toward the mansion, he had a little bundle wrapped in a handkerchief. When he bathed himself and opened it, he found that it contained clean clothing. Whenever you administer or pass the sacrament, look your very best. Be sure of your personal cleanliness.

### **Living above the ways of the world**

And so, my dear brethren, I might go on. I might discuss with you what is happening on the Internet and with the use of the computer that leads to degrading thoughts and actions. Suffice it to say it is totally unbecoming you as one who holds the priesthood of God. You are His chosen servant; you have been ordained to something holy and wonderful. You cannot live

in the world and partake of the ways of the world. You must be above all of that.

Now, my dear brethren, may the Lord bless you. To you boys I say, get on with your education. When you marry, yours will be the obligation to provide for your family. The world of opportunity lies ahead of you, and education is the key that will unlock that door. It will be the door of the mansion of which Joseph F. Smith dreamed when he was a boy sleeping on a mountain in Hawaii.

God bless you, my beloved brethren. Speak with the Lord in prayer. Cultivate kinship with Him. He is the Almighty, who has power to lift and help. I pray that it may be so in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "I Love the Lord."

Elder Paul V. Johnson offered the benediction.

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## **SUNDAY MORNING SESSION**

The fourth session of the 177th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, April 1, 2007. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Richard Elliott and Clay Christiansen were the organists. The choir sang "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!" to begin the session. President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

### **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

We welcome you this morning to the fourth general session of the 177th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, televi-

sion, the Internet, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders who are in attendance.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Richard Elliott and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!" and will now favor us with "The Lord My Pasture Will Prepare." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Robert K. Delenbach of the Seventy, followed by the choir singing "I Am a Child of God."

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be

our first speaker at this session. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Presidency of the Seventy will then speak to us, followed by Sister Vicki F. Matsumori, second counselor in the Primary general presidency.

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The choir sang “The Lord My Pasture Will Prepare.”

Elder Robert K. Dellenbach offered the invocation.

The choir sang “I Am a Child of God.”

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## President James E. Faust

My dear brothers and sisters and friends, I come before you humbly and prayerfully. I wish to speak on the healing power of forgiveness.

### The Amish people’s forgiveness

In the beautiful hills of Pennsylvania, a devout group of Christian people live a simple life without automobiles, electricity, or modern machinery. They work hard and live quiet, peaceful lives separate from the world. Most of their food comes from their own farms. The women sew and knit and weave their clothing, which is modest and plain. They are known as the Amish people.

A 32-year-old milk truck driver lived with his family in their Nickel Mines community. He was not Amish, but his pickup route took him to many Amish dairy farms, where he became known as the quiet milkman. Last October he suddenly lost all reason and control. In his tormented mind he blamed God for the death of his first child and some unsubstantiated memories. He stormed into the Amish school without any provocation, released the boys and adults, and tied up the 10 girls. He shot the girls, killing five and wounding five. Then he took his own life.

This shocking violence caused great anguish among the Amish but no anger. There was hurt but no hate. Their forgiveness was immediate. Collectively they began to reach out to the milkman’s suffering family. As the milkman’s family gathered in his home the day after the

shootings, an Amish neighbor came over, wrapped his arms around the father of the dead gunman, and said, “We will forgive you.”<sup>1</sup> Amish leaders visited the milkman’s wife and children to extend their sympathy, their forgiveness, their help, and their love. About half of the mourners at the milkman’s funeral were Amish. In turn, the Amish invited the milkman’s family to attend the funeral services of the girls who had been killed. A remarkable peace settled on the Amish as their faith sustained them during this crisis.

One local resident very eloquently summed up the aftermath of this tragedy when he said, “We were all speaking the same language, and not just English, but a language of caring, a language of community, [and] a language of service. And, yes, a language of forgiveness.”<sup>2</sup> It was an amazing outpouring of their complete faith in the Lord’s teachings in the Sermon on the Mount: “Do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you.”<sup>3</sup>

### Healing brought by forgiveness

The family of the milkman who killed the five girls released the following statement to the public:

“To our Amish friends, neighbors, and local community:

“Our family wants each of you to know that we are overwhelmed by the forgiveness, grace, and mercy that you’ve extended to us. Your love for our family has helped to provide the healing we so

desperately need. The prayers, flowers, cards, and gifts you've given have touched our hearts in a way no words can describe. Your compassion has reached beyond our family, beyond our community, and is changing our world, and for this we sincerely thank you.

"Please know that our hearts have been broken by all that has happened. We are filled with sorrow for all of our Amish neighbors whom we have loved and continue to love. We know that there are many hard days ahead for all the families who lost loved ones, and so we will continue to put our hope and trust in the God of all comfort, as we all seek to rebuild our lives."<sup>4</sup>

How could the whole Amish group manifest such an expression of forgiveness? It was because of their faith in God and trust in His word, which is part of their inner beings. They see themselves as disciples of Christ and want to follow His example.

Hearing of this tragedy, many people sent money to the Amish to pay for the health care of the five surviving girls and for the burial expenses of the five who were killed. As a further demonstration of their discipleship, the Amish decided to share some of the money with the widow of the milkman and her three children because they too were victims of this terrible tragedy.

### **Importance of not delaying forgiveness**

Forgiveness is not always instantaneous as it was with the Amish. When innocent children have been molested or killed, most of us do not think first about forgiveness. Our natural response is anger. We may even feel justified in wanting to "get even" with anyone who inflicts injury on us or our family.

Dr. Sidney Simon, a recognized authority on values realization, has provided an excellent definition of forgiveness as it applies to human relationships:

"Forgiveness is freeing up and putting to better use the energy once consumed by holding grudges, harboring resentments, and nursing unhealed wounds. It is rediscovering the strengths we always had and relocating our limitless capacity to understand and accept other people and ourselves."<sup>5</sup>

Most of us need time to work through pain and loss. We can find all manner of reasons for postponing forgiveness. One of these reasons is waiting for the wrongdoers to repent before we forgive them. Yet such a delay causes us to forfeit the peace and happiness that could be ours. The folly of rehashing long-past hurts does not bring happiness.

Some hold grudges for a lifetime, unaware that courageously forgiving those who have wronged us is wholesome and therapeutic.

### **Faith enables people to forgive**

Forgiveness comes more readily when, like the Amish, we have faith in God and trust in His word. Such faith "enables people to withstand the worst of humanity. It also enables people to look beyond themselves. More importantly, it enables them to forgive."<sup>6</sup>

All of us suffer some injuries from experiences that seem to have no rhyme or reason. We cannot understand or explain them. We may never know why some things happen in this life. The reason for some of our suffering is known only to the Lord. But because it happens, it must be endured. President Howard W. Hunter said that "God knows what we do not know and sees what we do not see."<sup>7</sup>

President Brigham Young offered this profound insight that at least some of our suffering has a purpose when he said: "Every calamity that can come upon mortal beings will be suffered to come upon the few, to prepare them to enjoy the presence of the Lord. . . . Every trial and experience you have passed through is necessary for your salvation."<sup>8</sup>

If we can find forgiveness in our hearts for those who have caused us hurt and injury, we will rise to a higher level of self-esteem and well-being. Some recent studies show that people who are taught to forgive become “less angry, more hopeful, less depressed, less anxious and less stressed,” which leads to greater physical well-being.<sup>9</sup> Another of these studies concludes “that forgiveness . . . is a liberating gift [that] people can give to themselves.”<sup>10</sup>

In our day the Lord has admonished us, “Ye ought to forgive one another,” and then makes it requisite when He says, “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.”<sup>11</sup>

A sister who had been through a painful divorce received some sound advice from her bishop: “Keep a place in your heart for forgiveness, and when it comes, welcome it in.”<sup>12</sup> For the Amish, it was already there because “forgiveness is a ‘heartfelt’ component of [their] religion.”<sup>13</sup> Their example of forgiveness is a sublime expression of Christian love.

### **Other examples of forgiveness**

Here in Salt Lake City in 1985, Bishop Steven Christensen, through no fault of his own, was cruelly and senselessly killed by a bomb intended to take his life. He was the son of Mac and Joan Christensen, the husband of Terri, and the father of four children. With his parents’ consent, I share what they learned from this experience. After this terrible deed, the news media followed members of the Christensen family around relentlessly. On one occasion this media intrusion offended one of the family members to the point that Steven’s father, Mac, had to restrain him. Mac then thought, “This thing will destroy my family if we don’t forgive. Venom and hatred will never end if we do not get it out of our system.” Healing and peace came as the family cleansed their hearts from anger and were able to forgive the man who took their son’s life.

We recently had two other tragedies here in Utah which demonstrate faith and the healing power of forgiveness. Gary Ceran, whose wife and two children were killed on Christmas Eve when their vehicle was hit by a truck, immediately expressed his forgiveness and concern for the alleged drunk driver. Last February, when a car crashed into Bishop Christopher Williams’s vehicle, he had a decision to make, and it was to “unconditionally forgive” the driver who had caused the accident so that the healing process could take place unhampered.<sup>14</sup>

### **Receiving help and comfort**

What can we all learn from such experiences as these? We need to recognize and acknowledge angry feelings. It will take humility to do this, but if we will get on our knees and ask Heavenly Father for a feeling of forgiveness, He will help us. The Lord requires us “to forgive all men”<sup>15</sup> for our own good because “hatred retards spiritual growth.”<sup>16</sup> Only as we rid ourselves of hatred and bitterness can the Lord put comfort into our hearts, just as He did for the Amish community, the Christensens, the Cerans, and the Williams family.

Of course, society needs to be protected from hardened criminals, because mercy cannot rob justice.<sup>17</sup> Bishop Williams addressed this concept so well when he said, “Forgiveness is a source of power. But it does not relieve us of consequences.”<sup>18</sup> When tragedy strikes, we should not respond by seeking personal revenge but rather let justice take its course and then let go. It is not easy to let go and empty our hearts of festering resentment. The Savior has offered to all of us a precious peace through His Atonement, but this can come only as we are willing to cast out negative feelings of anger, spite, or revenge. For all of us who forgive “those who trespass against us,”<sup>19</sup> even those who have committed serious crimes, the Atonement brings a measure of peace and comfort.

Let us remember that we need to forgive to be forgiven. In the words of one of my favorite hymns, “Oh, forgive as thou wouldst be e’en forgiven now by me.”<sup>20</sup> With all my heart and soul, I believe in the healing power that can come to us as we follow the counsel of the Savior “to forgive all men.”<sup>21</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. In Joan Kern, “A Community Cries,” *Lancaster New Era*, Oct. 4, 2006, p. A8.
2. In Helen Colwell Adams, “After That Tragic Day, a Deeper Respect among English, Amish?” *Sunday News*, Oct. 15, 2006, p. A1.
3. Matthew 5:44.
4. “Amish Shooting Victims,” <http://www.800padutch.com/amishvictims.shtml>.
5. With Suzanne Simon, *Forgiveness: How to Make Peace with Your Past and Get On with Your Life* (1990), 19.
6. Marjorie Cortez, “Amish Response to Tragedy Is Lesson in Faith, Forgiveness,” *Deseret Morning News*, Jan. 2, 2007, p. A13.
7. In Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 71; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 60.
8. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 345.
9. Fred Luskin, in Carrie A. Moore, “Learning to Forgive,” *Deseret Morning News*, Oct. 7, 2006, p. E1.
10. Jay Evensen, “Forgiveness Is Powerful but Complex,” *Deseret Morning News*, Feb. 4, 2007, p. G1.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 64:9, 10.
12. In “My Journey to Forgiving,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1997, 43.
13. Donald Kraybill, in Colby Itkowitz, “Flowers, Prayers, Songs: Families Meet at Roberts’ Burial,” *Intelligence Journal*, Oct. 9, 2006, p. A1.
14. See Pat Reavy, “Crash Victim Issues a Call for Forgiveness,” *Deseret Morning News*, Feb. 13, 2007, p. A1.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 64:10.
16. Orson F. Whitney, *Gospel Themes* (1914), 144.
17. See Alma 42:25.
18. In *Deseret Morning News*, Feb. 13, 2007, p. A8.
19. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:13.
20. “Reverently and Meekly Now,” *Hymns*, no. 185.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 64:10.

## Elder Dallin H. Oaks

I have felt impressed to speak about divorce. This is a sensitive subject because it evokes such strong emotions from persons it has touched in different ways. Some see themselves or their loved ones as the *victims* of divorce. Others see themselves as its *beneficiaries*. Some see divorce as evidence of failure. Others consider it an essential escape hatch from marriage. In one way or another, divorce touches most families in the Church.

Whatever your perspective, please listen as I try to speak plainly about the effects of divorce on the eternal family relationships we seek under the gospel plan. I speak out of concern, but with hope.

### Perspectives on marriage and divorce

We live in a world in which the whole concept of marriage is in peril and where divorce is commonplace.

The concept that society has a strong interest in preserving marriages for the common good as well as the good of the couple and their children has been replaced for many by the idea that marriage is only a private relationship between consenting adults, terminable at the will of either.<sup>1</sup>

Nations that had no divorce law have adopted one, and most nations permitting divorces have made them easier to obtain. Unfortunately, under current no-fault



divorce laws, it can be easier to sever a marriage relationship with an unwanted spouse than an employment relationship with an unwanted employee. Some even refer to a first marriage as a “starter marriage,” like a small home one uses for a while before moving on.

The weakening of the concept that marriages are permanent and precious has far-reaching consequences. Influenced by their own parents’ divorce or by popular notions that marriage is a ball and chain that prevents personal fulfillment, some young people shun marriage. Many who marry withhold full commitment, poised to flee at the first serious challenge.

In contrast, modern prophets have warned that looking upon marriage “as a mere contract that may be entered into at pleasure . . . and severed at the first difficulty . . . is an evil meriting severe condemnation,” especially where children are made to suffer.<sup>2</sup>

In ancient times and even under tribal laws in some countries where we now have members, men have power to divorce their wives for any trivial thing. Such unrighteous oppression of women was rejected by the Savior, who declared:

“Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

“And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery” (Matthew 19:8–9).

The kind of marriage required for exaltation—eternal in duration and godlike in quality—does not contemplate divorce. In the temples of the Lord, couples are married for all eternity. But some marriages do not progress toward that ideal. Because “of the hardness of [our] hearts,” the Lord does not currently enforce the consequences of the celestial standard. He permits divorced persons to marry again without the stain of immorality specified in

the higher law. Unless a divorced member has committed serious transgressions, he or she can become eligible for a temple recommend under the same worthiness standards that apply to other members.

### **To those who have been divorced**

There are many good Church members who have been divorced. I speak first to them. We know that many of you are innocent victims—members whose former spouses persistently betrayed sacred covenants or abandoned or refused to perform marriage responsibilities for an extended period. Members who have experienced such abuse have firsthand knowledge of circumstances worse than divorce.

When a marriage is dead and beyond hope of resuscitation, it is needful to have a means to end it. I saw examples of this in the Philippines. Two days after their temple marriage, a husband deserted his young wife and has not been heard from for over 10 years. A married woman fled and obtained a divorce in another country, but her husband, who remained behind, is still married in the eyes of the Philippine law. Since there is no provision for divorce in that country, these innocent victims of desertion have no way to end their married status and go forward with their lives.

We know that some look back on their divorces with regret at their own partial or predominant fault in the breakup. All who have been through divorce know the pain and need the healing power and hope that come from the Atonement. That healing power and that hope are there for them and also for their children.

### **To those who may be considering divorce**

Now I speak to married members, especially to any who may be considering divorce.

I strongly urge you and those who advise you to face up to the reality that for most marriage problems, the remedy is

not divorce but repentance. Often the cause is not incompatibility but selfishness. The first step is not separation but reformation. Divorce is not an all-purpose solution, and it often creates long-term heartache. A broad-based international study of the levels of happiness before and after “major life events” found that, on average, persons are far more successful in recovering their level of happiness after the *death* of a spouse than after a *divorce*.<sup>3</sup> Spouses who hope that divorce will resolve conflicts often find that it aggravates them, since the complexities that follow divorce—especially where there are children—generate new conflicts.

Think first of the children. Because divorce separates the interests of children from the interests of their parents, children are its first victims. Scholars of family life tell us that the most important cause of the current decline in the well-being of children is the current weakening of marriage, because family instability decreases parental investment in children.<sup>4</sup> We know that children raised in a single-parent home after divorce have a much higher risk for drug and alcohol abuse, sexual promiscuity, poor school performance, and various kinds of victimization.

### *Making efforts to preserve marriages*

A couple with serious marriage problems should see their bishop. As the Lord’s judge, he will give counsel and perhaps even discipline that will lead toward healing.

Bishops do not counsel members to divorce, but they can help members with the consequences of their decisions. Under the law of the Lord, a marriage, like a human life, is a precious, living thing. If our bodies are sick, we seek to heal them. We do not give up. While there is any prospect of life, we seek healing again and again. The same should be true of our marriages, and if we seek Him, the Lord will help us and heal us.

Latter-day Saint spouses should do all within their power to preserve their marriages. They should follow the marriage enrichment counsel in the First Presidency’s message in the April 2007 *Ensign* and *Liahona*.<sup>5</sup> To avoid so-called “incompatibility,” they should be best friends, kind and considerate, sensitive to each other’s needs, always seeking to make each other happy. They should be partners in family finances, working together to regulate their desires for temporal things.

Of course, there can be times when one spouse falls short and the other is wounded and feels pain. When that happens, the one who is wronged should balance current disappointments against the good of the past and the brighter prospects of the future.

Don’t treasure up past wrongs, reprocessing them again and again. In a marriage relationship, festering is destructive; forgiving is divine (see D&C 64:9–10). Plead for the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord to forgive wrongs (as President Faust has just taught us so beautifully), to overcome faults, and to strengthen relationships.

If you are already descending into the low state of marriage-in-name-only, please join hands, kneel together, and prayerfully plead for help and the healing power of the Atonement. Your humble and united pleadings will bring you closer to the Lord and to each other and will help you in the hard climb back to marital harmony.

### *An experienced bishop’s observations*

Consider these observations of a wise bishop with extensive experience in counseling members with marriage problems. Speaking of those who eventually divorced, he said:

“Universally, every couple or individual said they recognized that divorce was not a good thing, but they all insisted that their situation was different.

“Universally, they focused on the fault of the spouse and attributed little responsibility to their own behavior. Communication had withered.

“Universally, they were looking back, not willing to leave the baggage of past behavior on the roadside and move on.

“Part of the time, serious sin was involved, but more often they had just ‘fallen out of love,’ saying, ‘He doesn’t satisfy my needs anymore,’ or, ‘She has changed.’

“All were worried about the effect on the children, but always the conclusion was ‘it’s worse for them to have us together and fighting.’”

In contrast, the couples who followed this bishop’s counsel and stayed together emerged with their marriages even stronger. That prospect began with their mutual commitment to keep the commandments, stay active in their Church attendance, scripture reading, and prayer, and to work on their own shortcomings. They “recognized the importance and power of the Atonement for their spouse and for themselves,” and “they were patient and would try again and again.” When the couples he counseled did these things, repenting and working to save their marriages, this bishop reported that “healing was achieved 100 percent of the time.”

Even those who think their spouse is entirely to blame should not act hastily. One study found “no evidence that divorce or separation typically made adults happier than staying in an unhappy marriage. Two out of three unhappily married adults who avoided divorce reported being happily married five years later.”<sup>6</sup> A woman who persisted in an intolerable marriage for many years until the children were raised explained: “There were three parties to our marriage—my husband and I and the Lord. I told myself that if two of us could hang in there, we could hold it together.”

The power of hope expressed in these examples is sometimes rewarded with repentance and reformation, but sometimes

it is not. Personal circumstances vary greatly. We cannot control and we are not responsible for the choices of others, even when they impact us so painfully. I am sure the Lord loves and blesses husbands and wives who lovingly try to help spouses struggling with such deep problems as pornography or other addictive behavior or with the long-term consequences of childhood abuse.

Whatever the outcome and no matter how difficult your experiences, you have the promise that you will not be denied the blessings of eternal family relationships if you love the Lord, keep His commandments, and just do the best you can. When young Jacob “suffered afflictions and much sorrow” from the actions of other family members, Father Lehi assured him, “Thou knowest the greatness of God; and he shall consecrate thine afflictions for thy gain” (2 Nephi 2:1–2). Similarly, the Apostle Paul assured us that “all things work together for good to them that love God” (Romans 8:28).

### **To those contemplating marriage**

In conclusion, I speak briefly to those contemplating marriage. The best way to avoid *divorce* from an unfaithful, abusive, or unsupportive spouse is to avoid *marriage* to such a person. If you wish to marry well, inquire well. Associations through “hanging out” or exchanging information on the Internet are not a sufficient basis for marriage. There should be dating, followed by careful and thoughtful and thorough courtship. There should be ample opportunities to experience the prospective spouse’s behavior in a variety of circumstances. Fiancés should learn everything they can about the families with whom they will soon be joined in marriage. In all of this, we should realize that a good marriage does not require a perfect man or a perfect woman. It only requires a man and a woman committed to strive together toward perfection.

President Spencer W. Kimball taught: “Two individuals approaching the marriage altar must realize that to attain the happy marriage which they hope for they must know that marriage . . . means sacrifice, sharing, and even a reduction of some personal liberties. It means long, hard economizing. It means children who bring with them financial burdens, service burdens, care and worry burdens; but also it means the deepest and sweetest emotions of all.”<sup>7</sup>

From personal experience, I testify to the sweetness of the marriage and family life that the family proclamation describes as founded upon a husband and wife’s “solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children” and “upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>8</sup> I testify of Him as our Savior and pray in His name for all who strive for the supreme blessings of an eternal family, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See Bruce C. Hafen, *Covenant Hearts* (2005), 37–39; Allan Carlson, *Fractured Generations* (2005), 1–13; Bryce Christensen, *Divided We Fall* (2006), 44–45.
2. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1969, 8–9; or *Improvement Era*, June 1969, 5.
3. See Richard E. Lucas, “Adaptation and the Set-Point Model of Subjective Well-Being: Does Happiness Change after Major Life Events?” *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, Apr. 2007, 75–79.
4. See Jean Bethke Elstain and David Popenoe, *Marriage in America* (1995), quoted in Bruce C. Hafen, “Marriage and the State’s Legal Posture toward the Family,” *Vital Speeches of the Day*, Oct. 15, 1995, 18; see also *Marriage and the Public Good: Ten Principles* (Witherspoon Institute, 2006), 24.
5. James E. Faust, “Enriching Your Marriage,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2007, 4–8; *Liahona*, Apr. 2007, 2–6.
6. Linda J. Waite and others, *Does Divorce Make People Happy? Findings from a Study of Unhappy Marriages* (Institute for American Values, 2002), 6; see also scholarly studies cited in *Marriage and the Law: A Statement of Principles* (Institute for American Values, 2006), 21.
7. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (2006), 194.
8. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.

## Elder Neil L. Andersen

### A naval officer’s testimony

I take as my subject today something President Hinckley said in general conference in April of 1973.

I had just returned home from my mission. So much seemed ahead of me. Would I be able to consistently make the right choices throughout my life?

At that conference, Elder Gordon B. Hinckley spoke of meeting a young naval officer from Asia. The officer had not been a Christian, but during training in the United States, he had learned about the Church and was baptized. He was now preparing to return to his native land.

President Hinckley asked the officer: “Your people are not Christians. . . . What will happen when you return home a Christian and, more particularly, a Mormon Christian?”

The officer’s face clouded, and he replied: “My family will be disappointed. . . . As for my future and my career, . . . all opportunity [may] be foreclosed against me.”

President Hinckley asked, “Are you willing to pay so great a price for the gospel?”

With his dark eyes moistened by tears, he answered with a question: “It’s true, isn’t it?”

President Hinckley responded, “Yes, it’s true.”

To which the officer replied, “Then what else matters?”<sup>1</sup>

### Putting things in proper perspective

Through the years, I have reflected on these words: “It’s true, isn’t it? Then what else matters?” These questions have helped me put difficult issues in proper perspective.

The cause in which we are laboring is true. We respect the beliefs of our friends and neighbors. We are all sons and daughters of God. We can learn much from other men and women of faith and goodness, as President Faust taught us so well.

Yet we know that Jesus is the Christ. He is resurrected. In our day, through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the priesthood of God has been restored. We have the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Book of Mormon is what we claim it to be. The promises of the temple are certain. The Lord Himself has declared the unique and singular mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to be “a light to the world” and “a messenger . . . to prepare the way before [Him]”<sup>2</sup> even as “the gospel roll[s] forth unto the ends of the earth.”<sup>3</sup>

It’s true, isn’t it? Then what else matters?

Of course, for all of us, there *are* other things that matter. When I heard President Hinckley’s talk as a 21-year-old, I needed to be serious about my studies; I needed employment to keep me in school; somehow I had to figure out how to convince a special young lady that she should take a chance on me; and I enjoyed other worthy activities.

How do we find our way through the many things that matter? We simplify and purify our perspective. Some things are evil and must be avoided; some things are nice; some things are important; and some things are absolutely essential. The Savior said, “This is life eternal, that they

might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”<sup>4</sup>

### The lens of faith

Faith is not only a feeling; it is a decision. With prayer, study, obedience, and covenants, we build and fortify our faith. Our conviction of the Savior and His latter-day work becomes the powerful lens through which we judge all else. Then, as we find ourselves in the crucible of life, as Elder Oaks explained, we have the strength to take the right course.

President Hinckley said it this way: “When [an individual] is motivated by great and powerful convictions of truth, then he disciplines himself, not because of demands made . . . by the Church but because of the knowledge within his heart.”<sup>5</sup>

Are we sufficiently motivated by “great and powerful convictions of truth”? Do our choices reflect this motivation? Are we becoming who we want to become? It’s true, isn’t it? Then what else matters?

We know what is right. A few years ago my wife, Kathy, was with our grandchildren while their parents were away. Our four-year-old grandson gave his little brother a strong push. After consoling the crying child, she turned to the four-year-old and thoughtfully asked, “Why would you push your little brother?” He looked at his grandmother and responded, “Mimi, I’m sorry. I lost my CTR ring, and I cannot choose the right.” We need to be careful because excuses can impede our progress.

### Examples of faith and conviction

“Great and powerful convictions of truth” are found in the hearts of Latter-day Saints in nations across the world. This strength of faith carries the work of the kingdom forward.

Many years ago my wife and I stood by a courageous sister in France as her husband, still in his 30s, passed through the veil. The responsibility to righteously

teach and guide her four young children alone seemed overwhelming. Yet 16 years later, her three sons have returned from missions, and her daughter is sealed in the temple.

I know a brother in Brazil who joined the Church as a 16-year-old, the only member in his family. When it was time for his mission, his parents objected. He heard nothing from them during his mission and returned home to his bishop's house. The story, however, has a happy ending, as he now has a beautiful family and works as a dental surgeon, and his parents wish he could interest his brothers in the Church.

I know a brother in a Latin American country who, after his baptism, determined he would not only be honest in his tithing but would also fully pay his taxes, something his competitors did not do. The Lord blessed him for his honesty.

Many sacrifices are quietly accomplished: returned missionaries not delaying the responsibility of finding their eternal companion; righteous women desiring children and investing their lives in rearing them in love and truth; families carefully restricting the media and Internet influences that would tarnish their spirits; husbands and wives finding more time to be in the temple together.

Children can also develop this lens of faith. I recently met youth in Seoul, Korea, who, because of a rigorous school schedule, do not arrive home until very late each night yet attend early-morning seminary at 6:00 a.m. five days a week. I know an eight-year-old baseball player, a star of the team, who on his own explained to his coach that he could not participate in the final playoff game because it was to be held on Sunday.

Many of the quiet acts of deep faith are known only to God. But they are recorded in heaven. It's true, isn't it? Then what else matters?

The Savior said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."<sup>6</sup>

I testify that it is true and that it does matter. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1973, 72; or *Ensign*, July 1973, 48.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 45:9.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 65:2.
4. John 17:3.
5. In Conference Report, Apr. 1973, 73; or *Ensign*, July 1973, 49.
6. Matthew 6:33.

## Vicki F. Matsumori

### A message for first-generation members

I love the Book of Mormon. It has wonderful stories for children of all ages, but more importantly it teaches timeless lessons, which are often retold in Primary songs.

For example, a great lesson can be found in the song about the army of Helaman. We sing: "We are as the army of Helaman. We have been taught in our youth." There are many of us who also feel like "we have been born, as Nephi of old, to goodly parents."<sup>1</sup>

My message today is for you first-generation members who may have been born to goodly parents and yet were not taught the gospel in your homes. Instead of being like the army of Helaman, who "had been taught by their mothers [that] God would deliver them" (Alma 56:47), you may be like their parents, the people of Ammon, who grew up as nonbelievers.

It may be helpful to review the story about the people of Ammon. They were Lamanites who had been taught the gospel by Ammon, Aaron, and others (see

Alma 23:1–4). When they accepted the gospel, these Lamanites were called the Anti-Nephi-Lehies and later called the people of Ammon (see Alma 23:16–17; 27:23–26). The sons of these people of Ammon were the army of Helaman, who helped fight the nonconverted Lamanites (see Alma 56:3–6).

So the strength of the army of Helaman really began with their parents, who were the people of Ammon. They were the ones who first learned the gospel from the scriptures. They were the ones who learned about the power of prayer. And they were the ones who first made and kept covenants with the Lord. And just as it began with them, it begins with you. As first-generation members, you are the ones who begin the cycle of teaching and strengthening the next generation.

## Scriptures

Aaron, who was a great missionary, used the scriptures to teach the Lamanite king and the people of Ammon about faith and repentance and about Jesus Christ and the plan of happiness (see Alma 22:12–14; 23:4–5). Today, reading and studying the scriptures continues to build our faith, helps us resist temptation, and allows us to grow closer to Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

However, reading scriptures can present a challenge for everyone. President Boyd K. Packer shares his first attempts as a teenager at reading the Book of Mormon. He says: “I opened it and read, ‘I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents’ (1 Nephi 1:1). . . . It was interesting, and I could follow it until I got over to the Isaiah chapters. . . . So a few months later I decided to try again to read the Book of Mormon. I read, ‘I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents,’ but every time I’d hit the barrier of those Isaiah chapters. . . . Finally I decided I was even going to read them.”<sup>2</sup>

And of course President Packer did read them. Persistence is the key. With

every reading of the scriptures, unfamiliar words will take on meaning. You can read about heroes and great acts of courage. You can learn of the tender mercies of the Lord. And above all, you can feel the love of God and know that Jesus Christ is our Savior.

## Prayer

Prayer is another means to build faith. When the Lamanite king wanted to know what he should do in order to receive the joy of the gospel, he prayed to the Lord (see Alma 22:16–17). We too are promised that if we ask, it shall be given us.

Stanley was a 19-year-old investigator in Hong Kong. He was excited about the gospel and wanted to be baptized until his friends criticized the Church. He met with the missionaries. They testified that God cared enough about him to answer his prayer. They invited him to kneel and ask Heavenly Father if the teachings were true. First one companion and then the other offered a short prayer. Then Stanley prayed. When he finished his humble prayer, they asked him, “Stanley, how do you feel?” He slowly raised his head and in almost a whisper replied, “Baptism, baptism.”<sup>3</sup>

## Covenants

Finally, making and keeping covenants also increases faith. The people of Ammon covenanted “that rather than shed the blood of their brethren they would give up their own lives” (Alma 24:18).

We covenant when we are baptized and take upon us the name of Christ. We are reminded of those covenants when we partake of the sacrament. And when we keep those covenants, we can have the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. It is the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter, who teaches us “all things” (John 14:26).

A sister in Mexico City was 16 years old when the missionaries came to her door. She says that as they taught with the

Spirit, “it seemed like they had taken the bandages off my eyes and that the Lord was clearing my understanding. . . . The word of God and my prayers strengthened [me] to overcome my next trial, to face my father. When I met rejection from my family because of my baptism, the Spirit of the Lord strengthened me by whispering: ‘Keep on. Go on. Some of your relatives will become members of the Church.’”<sup>4</sup>

The scriptures, prayer, and making and keeping covenants have not only helped the people of Ammon but also first-generation members everywhere—including me. You see, while I was born of goodly parents, I was not taught the gospel at home. However, my parents did teach me moral values and ethical conduct. I remember my nonmember father helping me write the first talk I gave at church. The assigned topic was honesty, and instead of quoting the thirteenth article of faith, we used an example of a man whose nickname was Honest Abe.

It was left to Primary teachers, Young Women leaders, and priesthood leaders to provide me with gospel instruction. When I was seven years old, my junior Sunday School teacher taught us about prayer, and I wanted to pray. She taught us about tithing, and I wanted to pay tithing. She taught us about fasting, and, well, I was only seven years old, so I didn’t want to fast. But when she taught us about baptism, I wanted to be baptized. I am grateful for my goodly parents, who supported me in my decision and who later also became members of the Church.

### It begins with us

The people of Ammon lived the gospel, and “they were firm in the faith of Christ, even unto the end” (Alma 27:27).

It began with them. And it begins with us. As first-generation members who have gained testimonies, we now have a responsibility to teach the children of today. We must teach them in our homes and in our classes. We must teach them the word of God from the scriptures. We must teach them the power of prayer, and we must teach them the blessings that come from making and keeping covenants. And if we teach them, they will be able to say:

We are as the army of Helaman.  
We have been taught in our youth.  
And we will be the Lord’s missionaries  
To bring the world his truth.<sup>5</sup>

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. “We’ll Bring the World His Truth,” *Children’s Songbook*, 172–73.
2. “Principles of Teaching and Learning,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Feb. 2007; in *Ensign*, June 2007, 85.
3. Personal correspondence.
4. Personal correspondence.
5. *Children’s Songbook*, 173.

### President Hinckley

The choir and congregation will now sing “High on the Mountain Top.” Following the singing, we will hear from Elder Glenn L. Pace of the Seventy and Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir will then sing “For He Shall Give His Angels to Watch Over Thee,” followed by “When Faith Endures.”

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The choir and congregation sang  
“High on the Mountain Top.”

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## Elder Glenn L. Pace

### Do you know?

Some time ago I had a delightful conversation with an impressive 16-year-old young woman. I discovered she was the only member of the Church in her high school. I asked her, “What is the most difficult challenge you face being the only member?”

She was thoughtful and gave a very astute answer: “It is believing something is true when everyone else believes it is false, and believing something is wrong when everyone else believes it’s all right.”

I asked her a second question: “Do you know Joseph Smith is a prophet of God?” Her response was, “I think so, but I’m not sure.”

This morning I would like to ask the youth throughout the Church, “Do you know?”

### A witness of the Spirit

The first time I knew I had a testimony of Joseph Smith was when I was just 11 years old and my parents took me to Temple Square in Salt Lake City.

My favorite activity was to collect all the free stuff. I became very adept at working the system. I would ask, “Is this free?” After a positive response I would reach out my 11-year-old hand and say, “Thank you. Is that free too? Thank you!” On occasion someone might say, “No, I’m sorry; those cost five cents.” Undeterred, I would lower my head and, showing much disappointment, say, “Oh, I always wanted to read that pamphlet, but I don’t have any money. Thank you!” It worked every time. The truth is, I never read it. I just collected it.

However, on this particular trip, I was alone in our 1948 Chevrolet, waiting for my parents, when I became inescapably bored. In desperation I looked down at the seat and spotted my stack of free stuff. I picked up a pamphlet entitled *Joseph Smith Tells His Own Story* and began to read it.

I was riveted, and my heart was filled with joy. After completing it, I caught my reflection in the rearview mirror, and much to my surprise, I was crying. I didn’t understand then, but I understand now. I had felt a witness of the Spirit. My parents weren’t there. My sister wasn’t there. My Primary teacher wasn’t there. It was just me and the Spirit of the Holy Ghost.

Now, this can happen to you, and something similar probably already has.

When seeking a testimony, those of you born into the Church may be looking for some spectacular spiritual feeling different than anything you have ever felt before. You may have heard converts testify of their conversion and wonder if you’re missing something. One reason it seems so spectacular to them is that it is new.

You have had the same feelings your whole life during family home evenings, youth testimony meetings, seminary classes, scripture reading, and on many other occasions.

### Learning to recognize the Spirit

Our missionaries are trained to help investigators recognize when they are feeling the Spirit. I remember on numerous occasions stopping in the middle of an intense, spiritual discussion and saying, “Let’s pause for a moment and talk about what you are feeling right now. You’re feeling like we’ve reminded you of things you had forgotten. You’re feeling that we are telling you the truth. You’re feeling peace. You’re feeling the Holy Ghost.”

I remember teaching an extremely intelligent woman who had a hard time accepting anything until she had nailed down every intellectual loose end. However, at long last we heard her say, “I cannot deny this feeling any longer.”

She joined the Church and was very happy for the next few years, but she

gradually let her intellectual doubts creep back in and ultimately left the Church.

Fifteen years went by, and she came to visit our family. We took her to Temple Square. As we started up the circular ramp leading to the statue of the Savior, she paused and tearfully said, “Here comes that feeling again. My heart still yearns for what my mind won’t accept!”

Once you have felt it, you can never forget it.

Spiritual witnesses come at a young age to those who are exposed to spiritual experiences. As parents, teachers, and leaders, we are good at making certain you understand the rules and commandments. We could improve on helping you gain a testimony of the principles and doctrine. Perhaps we could pause more often and help you learn to recognize the Spirit.

Once you recognize those feelings for what they are, your faith in them will increase. Soon you will find that you have developed a spiritual sixth sense which cannot be misled.

### **Feelings activated by the Holy Ghost**

At 11 years of age, I knew Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. I didn’t hear voices, see angels, or anything like that. What I felt was much more certain. My spiritual sense had been touched. I felt elation springing forth from the innermost part of my being, which is protected from all deceit. This spiritual sense vibrates only when activated by the Holy Ghost.

How does this spiritual witness feel? It is as difficult to describe as the scent of a rose or the song of a bird or the beauty

of a landscape. Nevertheless, you know it when you feel it.

The scriptures give us some insights into these feelings:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy; and then shall ye know” (D&C 11:13–14).

Sometimes the feeling is like a memory. We first learned the gospel in our heavenly home. We have come to this earth with a veil of forgetfulness. And yet lingering in each of our spirits are those dormant memories. The Holy Ghost can part the veil and bring those things out of their dormancy. Often my reaction to a supposedly newfound truth is, “Oh, I remember that!”

“The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost . . . [will] bring all things to your remembrance” (John 14:26).

### **Invitation to read Joseph Smith story**

My young brothers and sisters, I invite you to “experiment upon my words” (Alma 32:27). Will you read and pray about the Joseph Smith story?

The wonderful thing about knowing it is true is that you know simultaneously that God the Father and Jesus Christ live and stand at the head of this Church today. I gained that knowledge when I was 11, and now I stand before you as an ordained especial witness of Jesus Christ and testify it is true. I also testify that the Lord wants you to know it is true, and He “will [reveal] the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 10:4). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder M. Russell Ballard**

### **The miracle of the Holy Bible**

My brothers and sisters, the Holy Bible is a miracle! It is a miracle that the

Bible’s 4,000 years of sacred and secular history were recorded and preserved by the prophets, apostles, and inspired churchmen.

It is a miracle that we have the Bible's powerful doctrine, principles, poetry, and stories. But most of all, it is a wonderful miracle that we have the account of the life, ministry, and words of Jesus, which was protected through the Dark Ages and through the conflicts of countless generations so that we may have it today.

It is a miracle that the Bible literally contains within its pages the converting, healing Spirit of Christ, which has turned men's hearts for centuries, leading them to pray, to choose right paths, and to search to find their Savior.

The Holy Bible is well named. It is holy because it teaches truth, holy because it warms us with its spirit, holy because it teaches us to know God and understand His dealings with men, and holy because it testifies throughout its pages of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Abraham Lincoln said of the Bible: "This Great Book . . . is the best gift God has given to man. All the good the Saviour gave to the world was communicated through this book. But for it we could not know right from wrong" (*Speeches and Writings, 1859–1865* [1989], 628).

### **Translators, martyrs, and reformers**

It is not by chance or coincidence that we have the Bible today. Righteous individuals were prompted by the Spirit to record both the sacred things they saw and the inspired words they heard and spoke. Other devoted people were prompted to protect and preserve these records. Men like John Wycliffe, the courageous William Tyndale, and Johannes Gutenberg were prompted against much opposition to translate the Bible into language people could understand and to publish it in books people could read. I believe even the scholars of King James had spiritual promptings in their translation work.

The Dark Ages were dark because the light of the gospel was hidden from the people. They did not have the apostles or

prophets, nor did they have access to the Bible. The clergy kept the scriptures secret and unavailable to the people. We owe much to the many brave martyrs and reformers like Martin Luther, John Calvin, and John Huss who demanded freedom to worship and common access to the holy books.

William Tyndale gave his life because he believed so deeply in the power of the Bible. He said, "The nature of God's word is, that whosoever read it, or hear it reasoned and disputed before him, it will begin immediately to make him every day better and better, till he be grown into a perfect man" (in S. Michael Wilcox, *Fire in the Bones: William Tyndale—Martyr, Father of the English Bible* [2004], xv).

Honest, diligent study of the Bible does make us better and better, and we must ever remember the countless martyrs who knew of its power and who gave their lives that we may be able to find within its words the path to the eternal happiness and the peace of our Heavenly Father's kingdom.

Although these early Christian reformers agreed on many things, they ultimately disagreed on many points of doctrine. This resulted in the organization of numerous Christian denominations. Roger Williams, an early champion of religious liberty, concluded that there was "no regularly-constituted Church on earth, nor any person authorized to administer any Church ordinance; nor could there be, until new apostles were sent by the great Head of the Church, for whose coming he was seeking" (see William Cullen Bryant, ed., *Picturesque America; or, the Land We Live In*, 2 vols. [1872–74], 1:502).

Tens of millions of individuals have come to a faith in God and in Jesus Christ through seeking truth in the Holy Bible. Countless numbers of them had nothing *but* the Bible to feed and guide their faith.

Because of the efforts of the reformers, "the Bible became a household possession. The word of God was read around

the family fireside of the lowly as well as the parlors of the great” (John A. Widtsoe, in Conference Report, Apr. 1939, 20).

### **The Bible and the Church of Jesus Christ**

Millions of families have come together seeking to find the Church of Jesus Christ through their study of the Bible. One of those families, in the early 1800s in upstate New York, was the family of Joseph Smith Sr. One of his sons was Joseph Smith Jr., who searched the Bible, seeking to know which of the many denominations was the same as the Church that Jesus Christ organized. He was prompted by the words of the Bible to pray for further spiritual light and knowledge from God. Determined to seek the wisdom promised in the holy scriptures, Joseph knelt in humble prayer early in the spring of 1820. Oh, what marvelous light and truth were shed upon him that day as he beheld the glorious manifestation of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ! Once again God called a prophet as He did in the days of Noah, Abraham, and Moses.

How grateful we should be for the Holy Bible. In it we learn not only of the life and teachings and doctrines of Christ, we learn of His Church and of His priesthood and of the organization which He established and named the Church of Jesus Christ in those former days. We believe in that Church, and we believe that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that same Church, restored to earth, complete, with the same organization and the same priesthood.

Without the Bible, we would not know of His Church then, nor would we have the fulness of His gospel now.

### **The value of the Bible**

I love the Bible, its teachings, its lessons, and its spirit. I love the Old Testament’s compelling, profound stories and its great prophets testifying of the coming of Christ. I love the New Testament’s

apostolic travels and miracles and the letters of Paul. Most of all, I love its eyewitness accounts of the words and the example and the Atonement of our Savior Jesus Christ. I love the perspective and peace that come from reading the Bible.

Brothers and sisters, I am sure many of you have had the experience of hearing people say that “Mormons are not Christians because they have their own Bible, the Book of Mormon.” To anyone harboring this misconception, we say that we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and the author of our salvation and that we believe, revere, and love the Holy Bible. We do have additional sacred scripture, including the Book of Mormon, but it supports the Bible, never substituting for it.

Jesus taught that we should “search the scriptures; for . . . they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39). These words provide insight and inspiration to all who sincerely seek to know and understand the truth about Jesus Christ. The scriptures are rich in history, doctrine, stories, sermons, and testimonies, all of which ultimately focus on the eternal Christ and His physical and spiritual mission to Heavenly Father’s children.

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believe that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable” (2 Timothy 3:16). We love the Bible and other scriptures. That may be surprising to some who may not be aware of our belief in the Bible as the revealed word of God. It is one of the pillars of our faith, a powerful witness of the Savior and of Christ’s ongoing influence in the lives of those who worship and follow Him. The more we read and study the Bible and its teachings, the more clearly we see the doctrinal underpinnings of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. We tend to love the scriptures that we spend time with. We may need to balance our study in order to love and understand all scripture.

You young people especially, do not discount or devalue the Holy Bible. It is

the sacred, holy record of the Lord's life. The Bible contains hundreds of pages more than all of our other scripture combined. It is the bedrock of all Christianity. We do not criticize or belittle anyone's beliefs. Our great responsibility as Christians is to share all that God has revealed with all of His sons and daughters.

Those who join this Church do not give up their faith in the Bible—they strengthen it. The Book of Mormon does not dilute nor diminish nor de-emphasize the Bible. On the contrary, it expands, extends, and exalts it. The Book of Mormon testifies of the Bible, and both testify of Christ.

### **Testaments of Christ**

The first testament of Christ is the Bible's Old Testament, which predicted and prophesied of the coming of the Savior, His transcendent life, and His liberating Atonement.

The second Bible testament of Christ is the New Testament, which records His birth, His life, His ministry, His gospel, His Church, His Atonement, and His Resurrection, as well as the testimonies of His Apostles.

The third testament of Christ is the Book of Mormon, which also foretells Christ's coming, confirms the Bible's account of His saving Atonement, and then reveals the resurrected Lord's visit to the earth's other hemisphere. The subtitle of the Book of Mormon, the clarifying purpose statement printed on the cover of every copy, is "Another Testament of Jesus Christ."

Each of these three testaments is a part of the great, indivisible whole of the Lord's revealed word to His children. They contain the words of Christ, which we have been admonished to feast upon as a means of qualifying for eternal life (see 2 Nephi 31:20). Those who think that one part is more important or more true than the other parts are missing some of the beauty

and completeness of the canon of ancient scripture.

And those who think that members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints do not believe in Jesus Christ or in the Bible should take time to understand the Church, the significance of its name, and the power of its message.

### **The Church's belief in the Bible**

I am puzzled by any who would question this Church's belief in the Bible and our position as Christians. The name of the Church is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In our last general conference, here in this building, our Church leaders quoted from the Bible nearly 200 times. This Church is organized and functions like the Church that Christ and His Apostles established in the New Testament. Seated on the stand today are the prophet and the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I bear solemn witness that we are true and full believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and in His revealed word through the Holy Bible. We not only believe the Bible—we strive to follow its precepts and to teach its message. The message of our missionaries is Christ and His gospel and His Atonement, and the scriptures are the text of that message. We say to all people, "We extend our love to you and invite you to come. Let us share all that God has revealed."

My brothers and sisters, we must help all people, including our own members, understand the power and importance of the Holy Bible. The Bible is scripture that leads us and all mankind to accept Jesus Christ as our Savior. May God grant us the desire and capacity to accept and live His teachings is my humble prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "For He Shall Give His Angels to Watch Over Thee" and "When Faith Endures."

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## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### The things of which I know

My beloved brothers and sisters, I am pleased with the opportunity to speak to you. I thank each of you for your prayers in my behalf. I am so very deeply grateful to you. In my 49 years as a General Authority, I have spoken well over 200 times in general conference. I am now in my 97th year. The wind is blowing, and I feel like the last leaf on the tree.

Actually my health is quite good, despite all the rumors to the contrary. Skillful doctors and nurses keep me on the right track. Some of you may go before I do. However, with my age in mind, I wish to give you my testimony of the basic truths of this work.

I confess that I do not know everything, but of some things I am certain. Of the things of which I know, I speak to you this morning.

### The nature of Deity

When the emperor Constantine was converted to Christianity, he became aware of the divisiveness among the clergy concerning the nature of Deity. In an attempt to overcome this, he gathered the eminent divines of the day to Nicaea in the year 325. Each participant was given opportunity to state his views. The argument only grew more heated. When a definition could not be reached, a compromise was made. It came to be known as the Nicene Creed, and its basic elements are recited by most of the Christian faithful.

Personally I cannot understand it. To me the creed is confusing.

How deeply grateful I am that we of this Church do not rely on any man-made statement concerning the nature of Deity. Our knowledge comes directly from the personal experience of Joseph Smith, who, while yet a boy, spoke with God the Eternal Father and His Beloved Son, the

Risen Lord. He knelt in Their presence, he heard Their voices, and he responded. Each was a distinct personality. Small wonder that he told his mother that he had learned that her church was not true. And so, one of the great overarching doctrines of this Church is our belief in God the Eternal Father. He is a being, real and individual. He is the great Governor of the universe, yet He is our Father, and we are His children.

We pray to Him, and those prayers are a conversation between God and man. I am confident that He hears our prayers and answers them. I could not deny that. I have had too many experiences of answered prayers.

Alma instructed his son Helaman, saying, "Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day" (Alma 37:37).

### Jesus is the living Christ

The second great certitude of which I am sure also has its foundation in the vision of the Prophet Joseph. It is that Jesus lives. He is the living Christ. He is the Jehovah of the Old Testament and the Messiah of the New. Under His Father's direction, He was the Creator of the earth. The Gospel of John opens with these remarkable words: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

"The same was in the beginning with God.

"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:1-3).

Note particularly that last verse, “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

He was the great Creator. It was His finger that wrote the commandments on the mount. It was He who left His royal courts on high and came to earth, born under the most humble of circumstances. During His brief ministry, He healed the sick, caused the blind to see, raised the dead, and rebuked the scribes and Pharisees. He was the only perfect man ever to walk the earth. All of this was part of His Father’s plan. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He suffered so greatly that he sweat drops of blood as He pleaded with His Father. But this was all a part of His great atoning sacrifice. He was taken by the mob and appeared before Pilate with the mob crying for His death. He carried the cross, the instrument of His death. On Golgotha He gave His life, crying out, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

His body was tenderly laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. But three days later, on that first Easter morning, the tomb was emptied. Mary of Magdala spoke to Him, and He spoke to her. He appeared to His Apostles. He walked with two disciples on the road to Emmaus. And, we are told, He was seen by some 500 others (see 1 Corinthians 15:6).

He had said, “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (John 10:16). Accordingly, He appeared to those assembled in the land Bountiful in the Western Hemisphere. Here, He taught the people as He had taught them in the Old World. This is all recorded in detail in the Book of Mormon, which stands as a second witness of the divinity of our Lord.

And to repeat, both He and His Father appeared to the boy Joseph, the Father introducing the Son, saying: “This is

My Beloved Son. Hear Him!” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17).

### **The Atonement**

Now, the next thing of which I am certain, and of which I bear witness, is the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. Without it, life is meaningless. It is the keystone in the arch of our existence. It affirms that we lived before we were born in mortality. Mortality is but a stepping-stone to a more glorious existence in the future. The sorrow of death is softened with the promise of the Resurrection. There would be no Christmas if there were no Easter.

### **Restoration of the priesthood**

I speak next of the great certitudes that have come with the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is the restoration of the priesthood, or the authority given man to speak in the name of God. This priesthood is of two orders: the lesser, also known as the Aaronic, was restored under the hands of John the Baptist. The higher order of priesthood, the Melchizedek, was restored under the hands of Peter, James, and John.

In restoring the Aaronic Priesthood, the resurrected John the Baptist laid his hands on the heads of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and said, “Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins” (D&C 13:1).

President Wilford Woodruff in his old age spoke to the young men of the Church and said: “I desire to impress upon you the fact that it does not make any difference whether a man is a Priest or an Apostle, if he magnifies his calling. A Priest holds the keys of the ministering of angels. Never in my life, as an Apostle, as a Seventy, or as an Elder, have I ever had more of the protection of the Lord

than while holding the office of a Priest” (in *Millennial Star*, Oct. 5, 1891, 629).

The Melchizedek or Higher Priesthood empowers men to lay their hands upon the heads of others and give blessings. They bless the sick. As James declared in the New Testament: “Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord” (James 5:14).

### Temple blessings

Now finally, I mention the blessings of the house of the Lord, which have come of the Restoration of the ancient gospel.

These temples, which we have greatly multiplied in recent years, offer blessings that are had nowhere else. All that occurs in these sacred houses has to do with the eternal nature of man. Here, husbands and wives and children are sealed together as families for all eternity. Marriage is not “until death do ye part.” It is forever, if the parties live worthy of the blessing. Most remarkable of all is the authority to do vicarious work in the house of the Lord. Here, ordinances are performed in behalf of the dead who did not have opportunity to receive them while in life.

I was recently told of a woman in Idaho Falls, a widow. Over a period of 15 years she acted as proxy in giving the tem-

ple endowment to 20,000 individuals in the Idaho Falls Idaho Temple. She completed her 20,000th endowment on a Friday and returned on Saturday to do five more. She passed away the following week.

Just think of what this one little woman did. She performed these vicarious endowments for as many people as are assembled in this Conference Center this morning. Think of the reception she must have received on the other side.

Now, my brothers and sisters, this is my testimony, which I solemnly bear before you.

God bless you, every one, you faithful Latter-day Saints. May there be peace and love in your homes and faith and prayer to guide you in all that you undertake is my humble prayer in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

We express our thanks to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they provided and also express sincere thanks to all who participated in any way.

The choir will sing “O My Father.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Won Yong Ko of the Seventy. The concluding session of this conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

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The choir sang “O My Father.”

Elder Won Yong Ko offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 177th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 1, 2007. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 177th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day



Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "From All That Dwell below the Skies." The invocation will then be offered by Elder H. Ross Workman of the Seventy.

Following the invocation, the choir will sing "There Is Sunshine in My Soul Today." At the conclusion of the singing, Elders L. Tom Perry and Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. Following their remarks, we shall hear from Elder Gary J. Coleman of the Seventy, and he will be followed by Brother Charles W. Dahlquist, Young Men general president.

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The choir sang "From All That Dwell below the Skies."

Elder H. Ross Workman offered the invocation.

The choir sang "There Is Sunshine in My Soul Today."

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## Elder L. Tom Perry

### A young man's priesthood service

In one of my stake conference assignments in the Salt Lake Valley, I invited a young deacons quorum president to join me to talk about the keys of the priesthood. I wanted him to understand that he held a very special office that included the keys to preside over a quorum of the priesthood. We talked about the great responsibility it is to hold keys and how special it is to belong to a quorum. At the conclusion of the little presentation, I asked him how many members he had in his quorum. His answer was 14.

Then the question: "How many are active?"

The answer: "Twelve."

Then I asked, "What about the other two?"

His response was, "I need to get to work and make them an active part of our quorum."

I asked him how long that would take. He thought maybe three months. I encouraged him in his efforts.

Three months later, almost to the day, I received a letter from him informing me that all the members of his quorum were now active. He said he had befriended them, and one was now attending deacons quorum meetings, and the other had been ordained a teacher by the bishop. I was overwhelmed with his response. What an example of one honoring his priesthood and using priesthood keys to carry out an assignment the Lord has given him to fulfill. I could not help but marvel at the design the Lord has established for the administration of His work here on earth using the powers of the priesthood.

### The message of the Restoration

This young man, not yet 14 years of age, is receiving valuable training to prepare him for a lifetime of service. Can you see him in the next five or six years continuing this service with a badge on his suit coat indicating that he is giving two years of his life as a missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?

In addition to the experience he is gaining exercising his priesthood in service to others, this young man's preparation must also include a solid understanding of the message of the Restoration—the message that thousands of missionaries today are declaring to the world. It is the message that in our day, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, the gospel has been restored for the blessing of all who will listen and obey.

### The First Vision

The dispensation of the fulness of times was ushered in by a very special vision to another young man not quite 15 years of age who went to the woods to pray for answers to the questions he had in his mind concerning religion. Joseph Smith describes the glorious vision that was unfolded to his view, in these words:

“I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

“... When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*” (Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17).

This vision revealed unto us that God our Father and Jesus Christ, His Beloved Son, are two separate personages. Each has a body of flesh and bones that is glorified and perfected, thus clearing up the misconception that had been in existence for many centuries concerning the concept of God. Is it any wonder that when Joseph Smith wrote the Articles of Faith, in the first one he declared, “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost”? (Articles of Faith 1:1).

### The Book of Mormon

Knowing that doubt, disbelief, and misinformation would immediately follow the Prophet as he recounted the First Vision, the Lord brought forth the Book of Mormon, another testament of our Lord Jesus Christ. This ancient volume of holy scriptures is a sacred companion to the Bible, containing the fulness of the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ. It also provides convincing evidence to the world that Joseph Smith is truly a prophet of God. The Doctrine and Covenants contains the following declaration about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon:

“[God] gave unto [Joseph Smith] commandments which inspired him;

“And gave him power from on high, by the means which were before prepared, to translate the Book of Mormon;

“Which contains a record of a fallen people, and the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles and to the Jews also;

“Which was given by inspiration, and is confirmed to others by the ministering of angels, and is declared unto the world by them—

“Proving to the world that the holy scriptures are true, and that God does inspire men and call them to his holy work in this age and generation, as well as in generations of old” (D&C 20:7–11).

The translation of the Book of Mormon is a miracle in itself and gives further proof of the book's divine origin. When Oliver Cowdery arrived in Harmony, Pennsylvania, on April 5, 1829, to serve as the Prophet's scribe, only a few pages of the final text had been translated. That evening Joseph and Oliver sat down together and discussed the Prophet's experiences long into the night. Two days later, on April 7, they commenced the translation of the work. Over the next three months, Joseph translated at an amazing rate—approximately 500 printed pages in about 60 working days.

Oliver wrote of this remarkable experience: “These were days never to be forgotten—to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the *inspiration* of heaven, awakened the utmost gratitude of this bosom! Day after day I continued, uninterrupted, to write from his mouth, as he translated, with the *Urim and Thummim*, . . . the history, or record, called ‘The book of Mormon’” (*Messenger and Advocate*, Oct. 1834, 14; see also Joseph Smith—History 1:71, note).

### The priesthood

As they proceeded, Joseph and Oliver were thrilled with the doctrines contained in this book. They were particularly impressed with the doctrine of baptism as taught by the resurrected Savior during His visit to the inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere. The importance of the doctrine of baptism was clearly unfolded to their minds. They determined that they must seek the Lord in mighty prayer that they might learn how they could obtain the blessing of being baptized themselves.

On May 15, 1829, they went to the woods near the Susquehanna River and knelt in prayer. Oliver describes what happened next: “On a sudden, as from the midst of eternity, the voice of the Redeemer spake peace to us, while the vail was parted and the angel of God came down clothed with glory, and delivered the anxiously looked for message, and the keys of the gospel of repentance!—What joy! what wonder! what amazement! While the world [was] racked and distracted—while millions were [groping] as the blind for the wall, and while all men were resting upon uncertainty, as a general mass, our eyes beheld—our ears heard” (*Messenger and Advocate*, Oct. 1834, 15; see also Joseph Smith—History 1:71, note).

The angel introduced himself as John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the New Testament. He laid his hands upon the heads of Joseph and Oliver and said:

*“Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.”*

“He said this Aaronic Priesthood had not the power of laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but that this should be conferred on us hereafter; and he commanded us to go and be baptized, and gave us directions that I should baptize Oliver Cowdery, and that afterwards he should baptize me.

“Accordingly we went and were baptized. I baptized him first, and afterwards he baptized me—after which I laid my hands upon his head and ordained him to the Aaronic Priesthood, and afterwards he laid his hands on me and ordained me to the same Priesthood—for so we were commanded” (Joseph Smith—History 1:69–71).

A short time later, the Apostles Peter, James, and John appeared, placed their hands on the heads of these two fellow servants, and conferred the Melchizedek Priesthood.

### The Church of Jesus Christ

Now that the power to act in the name of the Lord was again on the earth, Joseph was commanded to formally organize the Church. On April 6, 1830, at the home of Peter Whitmer Sr. in Fayette, New York, six men who had previously been baptized voted unanimously to organize, according to the commandments of God, the Church of Jesus Christ. At this meeting a revelation was received:

“Behold, there shall be a record kept among you; and in it thou [Joseph Smith] shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God

the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ,

“Being inspired of the Holy Ghost to lay the foundation thereof, and to build it up unto the most holy faith.

“Which church was organized and established in the year of your Lord eighteen hundred and thirty, in the fourth month, and on the sixth day of the month which is called April.

“Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

“For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith” (D&C 21:1–5).

Thus the Church of Jesus Christ was again in existence on the earth to bless mankind with the doctrines and teachings of the Savior. This Church was organized according to the plan the Lord had established anciently.

In the Bible, in the book of Ephesians, Paul declared:

“He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Ephesians 4:11–15).

## A unique and glorious message

President Hinckley has said concerning the Restoration: “After many generations had walked the earth—so many of them in conflict, hatred, darkness, and evil—there arrived the great, new day of the Restoration. This glorious gospel was ushered in with the appearance of the Father and the Son to the boy Joseph. The dawn of the dispensation of the fulness of times rose upon the world. All of the good, the beautiful, the divine of all previous dispensations was restored in this most remarkable season” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2004, 84; or *Ensign*, May 2004, 83).

Our message is unique. We declare to the world that the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored to the earth. We declare with boldness that the keys of the priesthood have been restored to man, with the power to seal on earth and in the heavens. The saving ordinances pronounced by the Lord as requirements for entering into eternal life with Him can now be performed with binding authority by those who worthily exercise the power of His holy priesthood. We declare to the world that this is the day referred to by biblical prophets as the latter days. It is the final time, before the coming of Jesus Christ to rule and reign over the earth.

We invite all to listen to the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ from us. Then you can compare the glorious message with what you may hear from others, and you can determine which is from God and which is from man.

My witness to you is that this is the Church of Jesus Christ, established in the latter days. In the name of our Lord and Savior, even Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Henry B. Eyring

### The danger of procrastination

There is a danger in the word *someday* when what it means is “not this day.” “Someday I will repent.” “Someday I will forgive him.” “Someday I will speak to my friend about the Church.” “Someday I will start to pay tithing.” “Someday I will return to the temple.” “Someday . . .”

The scriptures make the danger of delay clear. It is that we may discover that we have run out of time. The God who gives us each day as a treasure will require an accounting. We will weep, and He will weep, if we have intended to repent and to serve Him in tomorrows which never came or have dreamt of yesterdays where the opportunity to act was past. This day is a precious gift of God. The thought “Someday I will” can be a thief of the opportunities of time and the blessings of eternity.

There is solemn warning and counsel in the words recorded in the Book of Mormon:

“And now, as I said unto you before, as ye have had so many witnesses, therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; for after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed.

“Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, that I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world.”<sup>1</sup>

Then Amulek warns that procrastinating your repentance and service can cause the Spirit of the Lord to withdraw from you.

But with the warning he gives this hope: “And this I know, because the Lord

hath said he dwelleth not in unholy temples, but in the hearts of the righteous doth he dwell; yea, and he has also said that the righteous shall sit down in his kingdom, to go no more out; but their garments should be made white through the blood of the Lamb.”<sup>2</sup>

### Serving the Lord without delay

The scriptures are filled with examples of wise servants of God who treasured the day they were in and chose to do what they could to bring cleansing. Joshua was one: “Choose you this day whom ye will serve . . .,” he said, “but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”<sup>3</sup>

Serving Him invites the Holy Ghost to be with us. And the Holy Ghost is a cleanser of sin.

Even the Savior, who was without sin, set an example of the need not to procrastinate. He said:

“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

“As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”<sup>4</sup>

As the risen Savior, He is this day and forever the Light of the World. It is He who invites us to come unto Him and serve Him, without delay. His encouragement to you and to me is this: “I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.”<sup>5</sup>

That is as true of a day as it is of a life. A morning prayer and an early search in the scriptures to know what we should do for the Lord can set the course of a day. We can know which task, of all those we might choose, matters most to God and therefore to us. I have learned such a prayer is always answered if we ask and ponder with childlike submission, ready to act without delay to perform even the most humble service.

### The test of faithful obedience

On many days, doing what matters most will not be easy. It is not supposed to be. God's purpose in creation was to let us prove ourselves. The plan was explained to us in the spirit world before we were born. We were valiant enough there to qualify for the opportunity to choose against temptation here to prepare for eternal life, the greatest of all the gifts of God. We rejoiced to know the test would be one of faithful obedience even when it would not be easy: "And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them."<sup>6</sup>

Hard as we knew the test would be, we felt joy because we had confidence that we could pass it. Our confidence came from knowing that Jesus Christ would come into the world as our Savior. He would overcome death. He would make it possible for us to be cleansed of our sins by qualifying for the effects of His Atonement.

We also knew some reassuring facts about what it would take to receive the purifying which we would need. Everything that cleansing would require—baptism by authority, receiving the Holy Ghost under the hands of authorized priesthood bearers, remembering Him and therefore having His Spirit to be with us, and then keeping His commandments—all would be possible for the humblest of us. It would not take superior intellect, nor would it take wealth, nor long life. And we knew that the Savior would draw us to Him and would have the power to help us when the test would be hard and the temptation to procrastinate great. Alma, the great prophet, described how Christ gained that ability:

"And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.

"And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities."<sup>7</sup>

All of us will need His help to avoid the tragedy of procrastinating what we must do here and now to have eternal life. For most of us the temptation to delay will come from one or both of two feelings. They are polar opposites: one is to be complacent about what we have already done, and the other is to feel overwhelmed by the need to do more.

### The danger of complacency

Complacency is a danger for us all. It can come to naive youth who feel that there will be plenty of time in the future for spiritual things. They might think that they have already done enough, considering the brief time they have lived. I know from experience how the Lord can help such a youth to see that he or she is in the midst of spiritual things now. He can help you see that classmates are watching you. He can help you see that their eternal future is shaped by what they observe you do or not do. Your simple thanks for their influence for good on you can lift them more than you imagine. When you ask God, He can and will reveal to you the opportunities to lift others for Him, which He has placed around you from your infancy.

Complacency can affect even the seasoned adult. The better and the longer you serve, the more likely that the tempter can place this lie in your mind: "You have earned a rest." You may have been the Primary president in your little branch twice. Or you may have worked long and hard on your mission and sacrificed so much to serve. Or perhaps you were the pioneer in the Church where you live. The thought may come: "Why not leave the service to

the new people. I have done my part.” The temptation will be to believe that you will return to serve again, someday.

The Lord can help you see the danger in taking a rest because you feel you have done enough. He helped me by letting me have a conversation with one of His aged servants. He was feeble, his body weakened by decades of faithful labor and by illness. His doctors no longer allowed him to leave his home. At his request, I reported a trip I had taken in the Lord’s service, across several nations, in dozens of meetings, and in many private interviews, helping individuals and families. I told him of the gratitude people expressed to me for him and his many years of service. He asked me if I had another assignment soon. I told him about another long trip soon to come. He surprised me, and he gave me an inoculation against complacency which I hope will last forever, when he grabbed my arm and said, “Oh, please, take me with you.”

### **Praying to know what we can do**

It is hard to know when we have done enough for the Atonement to change our natures and so qualify us for eternal life. And we don’t know how many days we will have to give the service necessary for that mighty change to come. But we know that we will have days enough if only we don’t waste them. Here is the good news:

“And the days of the children of men were prolonged, according to the will of God, that they might repent while in the flesh; wherefore, their state became a state of probation, and their time was lengthened, according to the commandments which the Lord God gave unto the children of men.”<sup>8</sup>

That assurance from the Master can help those of us feeling overwhelmed by our circumstances. In the hardest trials, as long as you have the power to pray, you can ask a loving God: “Please let me serve, this day. It doesn’t matter to me how few

things I may be able to do. Just let me know what I *can* do. I will obey this day. I know that I can, with Thy help.”

The quiet invitation to you may be to do so simple a thing as to forgive someone who has offended you. You can do that from a hospital bed. It may be to go to help someone who is hungry. You may feel overwhelmed by your own poverty and the labors of the day. But if you decide not to wait until you have more strength and more money, and if you pray for the Holy Spirit as you go, you will when you arrive know what to do and how to help someone even poorer than you are. You may find when you get there that they were praying and expecting that someone like you would come, in the name of the Lord.

### **Blessings of choosing to serve this day**

For those who are discouraged by their circumstances and are therefore tempted to feel they cannot serve the Lord this day, I make you two promises. Hard as things seem today, they will be better in the next day if you choose to serve the Lord this day with your whole heart. Your circumstances may not be improved in all the ways which you desire. But you will have been given new strength to carry your burdens and new confidence that when your burdens become too heavy, the Lord, whom you have served, will carry what you cannot. He knows how. He prepared long ago. He suffered your infirmities and your sorrows when He was in the flesh so that He would know how to succor you.

The other promise I make to you is that by choosing to serve Him this day, you will feel His love and grow to love Him more. You may remember the scripture:

“I say unto you, I would that ye should remember to retain the name written always in your hearts, . . . that ye hear and know the voice by which ye shall be called, and also, the name by which he shall call you.

“For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?”<sup>9</sup>

By serving Him this day, you will come to know Him better. You will feel His love and appreciation. You would not want to delay receiving that blessing. And feeling His love will draw you back to His service, wiping away both complacency and discouragement.

As you serve Him, you will come to know better the voice by which you shall be called. When you go to sleep at the end of a day, the words may come back in memory: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things.”<sup>10</sup> I pray for that benediction on this day, on every day, and on our lives.

I know that Heavenly Father lives and answers our prayers. I know that Jesus is the living Christ, the Savior of the world, and that we can choose to feel joy and peace in His service this day. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Alma 34:33–34.
2. Alma 34:36.
3. Joshua 24:15.
4. John 9:4–5.
5. Proverbs 8:17.
6. Abraham 3:25.
7. Alma 7:11–12.
8. 2 Nephi 2:21.
9. Mosiah 5:12–13.
10. Matthew 25:21; see also v. 23.

## Elder Gary J. Coleman

### “Are we Christians?”

Christianity celebrates the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God the Eternal Father. Christian churches with great variations of doctrine dot the land the world over. When 14-year-old Cortnee, a daughter of a mission president, entered a new high school as a freshman, she was asked by classmates if she was a Christian. They scoffed at her response that she was a Mormon, a common reference to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Upon arriving home, she asked her mother, “Mom, are we Christians?”

Growing up in my family, we lived as devout members of another Christian faith. I was baptized a member of that church shortly after my birth. Our family went to church each week. For many years my brothers and I assisted the pastors who conducted our Sunday services. I was taught the importance of family prayer as our family prayed together each day. I thought that someday I would enter the

full-time ministry in my church. There was no question in our minds that we could define ourselves as devout Christians.

When I was a university student, however, I became acquainted with the members and teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a Christian faith centered on the Savior. I began to learn about the doctrine of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in these latter days. I learned truths that I had not known before that changed my life and how I viewed the gospel. After much studying, prayer, and faith, I chose to embrace beautiful restored truths found only in this Church.

### The nature of the Godhead

The first restored truth that I learned was the nature of the Godhead. The true Christian doctrine that the Godhead consists of three separate beings was known in biblical times. God bore witness of Jesus, His Only Begotten Son, on several occasions. He spoke at Jesus’s baptism: “This is



my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”<sup>1</sup> Jesus Himself testified of God, His Father, when He said, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”<sup>2</sup> After Jesus’s death and Resurrection, we learn that Stephen, “he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.”<sup>3</sup> What a dramatic testimony of the Godhead from that disciple of Christ.

The knowledge of God and His physical separateness from His Son and the Holy Ghost was lost after the death of Christ and His Apostles. Confusion and false doctrines about the Godhead were fashioned out of the Nicene Creed and Constantinople councils, where men declared that instead of three separate beings, the Godhead was three persons in one God, or the Trinity. Just as Christian Protestant reformers struggled with these creeds of men, I did as well. The teachings about the Trinity that I learned in my youth were incomprehensible to me.

However, when I was introduced to the glorious truths of the First Vision experienced by the Prophet Joseph Smith, it was a stunning awakening for me to finally understand the truth about the nature of God the Eternal Father and His Only Begotten Son. Joseph declared: “I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*”<sup>4</sup> This heavenly vision restored the wondrous yet plain and precious knowledge of God and His Son to the earth again, dispelling at once the teachings I had learned about the Trinity.

I know that heaven-sent revelations have replaced the gross errors of man-made doctrines concerning the Godhead.

I know that God is our Heavenly Father. His Son, Jesus Christ, is my Savior. The Holy Ghost testifies of the Father and the Son. I express my profound gratitude to God for introducing the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ to mankind in these last days. The Savior lives; He has been seen; He has spoken; He directs the work of His Church through apostles and prophets today. What magnificent truths He has taught as the Good Shepherd who continues to look after His sheep.

### **The Book of Mormon**

The second restored truth I learned as an investigator of this Church was the reality of additional scripture and revelation. The prophet Isaiah saw in vision a book that he proclaimed was part of “a marvelous work and a wonder.”<sup>5</sup> I testify that the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ is that book. It is a sacred record written by prophets of God to persuade all people to come unto Christ, and it helps to reveal the gospel of Jesus Christ in its fulness. The Book of Mormon tells of prophets and other faithful members of the Church who took upon themselves the name of Christ, even before the Savior’s birth.<sup>6</sup> This book tells of the resurrected Christ teaching men what they must do to gain peace in this life and eternal salvation in the world to come. What could be more Christian than seeking to take His name upon ourselves and follow His counsel to become like Him?

President Gordon B. Hinckley has said, “I cannot understand why the Christian world does not accept this book.”<sup>7</sup> I first read the Book of Mormon at the age of 21. I then asked God if it was true. The truth of it was manifested unto me by the comforting power of the Holy Ghost.<sup>8</sup> I know that the Book of Mormon is a second testament of Jesus Christ. I join my testimony with the prophets of this sacred book to declare that “we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we

prophecy of Christ.”<sup>9</sup> I am deeply grateful for every word that He has spoken and for every word He continues to speak as He quenches our thirst with living water.

### Restoration of priesthood authority

Another restored truth of the gospel I became acquainted with was the restoration of priesthood authority, or the power to act in God’s name. Former prophets and apostles, such as Elijah, Moses, John the Baptist, Peter, James, and John, have been sent by God and Christ in our day to restore the holy priesthood of God. Every priesthood holder in this Church can trace his priesthood authority directly to Jesus Christ. Men now possess the keys to establish the Church so that we can come unto Christ and partake of His eternal ordinances of salvation.<sup>10</sup> I testify that this is the Church of Jesus Christ—the only church authorized with true priesthood authority to exercise the keys of salvation through sacred ordinances.

Cortnee asked, “Mom, are we Christians?” As a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, you are a

Christian, and I am too. I am a devout Christian who is exceedingly fortunate to have greater knowledge of the true “doctrine of Christ”<sup>11</sup> since my conversion to the restored Church. These truths define this Church as having the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Like other members of the Church, I now understand the true nature of the Godhead, I have access to additional scripture and revelation, and I can partake of the blessings of priesthood authority. Yes, Cortnee, we are Christians, and I testify of these truths in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Matthew 3:17.
2. John 17:3.
3. Acts 7:55–56.
4. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
5. Isaiah 29:14; see also vv. 11–12, 18.
6. See Alma 46:14–16.
7. In Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 86; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 81.
8. See Moroni 10:4–5.
9. 2 Nephi 25:26.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 2; 13; 110; 112:32.
11. 2 Nephi 31:2; see also 3 Nephi 11:31–36.

## Charles W. Dahlquist II

My dear brethren and sisters, I am grateful that we live in a day and age when apostles and prophets walk the earth and provide inspiration and guidance for us. I bear my witness that President Hinckley is indeed a prophet of God—just as was Moses, Abraham, and all the other prophets since the world began. I am grateful for his counsel this morning and for the opportunity we will have at the conclusion of this conference to hear from him once again.

### A chosen generation

Today I speak particularly to the young men and young women of the

Church, as well as to their parents and leaders. I speak also to the great young single adults, who have such marvelous talents and capabilities and potential for service in the kingdom.

President Hinckley has said of this generation: “There never was a time such as this. What a season in the history of the world to be alive! Never before has there been such a generation of youth. . . . You really are ‘a chosen generation’” (*Way to Be!* [2002], 3).

*You*, as the youth of Zion, have a great work to do and have been given all the talents and opportunities, regardless of where you live, to do just exactly what

your Father in Heaven expects of you. I pray that my comments this afternoon will help you in that quest.

### **“Who’s on the Lord’s side?”**

In February 1852, a young woman by the name of Hannah Last Cornaby was baptized in Yarmouth, England. It was not the quiet, reverent experience most have but was described by her in these words: “We found the house surrounded by a mob, through which we with difficulty made our way. . . . Before we reached the water’s edge, the whole horde was upon us; and my husband baptized me amid a shower of stones, and shouts . . . and, although the stones whizzed around us thick as hail, not one touched us, and we reached home in safety, thanking God for our miraculous deliverance” (Hannah Cornaby, *Autobiography and Poems* [1881], 24–25).

Her life that followed was not an easy one. Years later, she wrote these words:

Who’s on the Lord’s side? Who?  
Now is the time to show.  
We ask it fearlessly:  
Who’s on the Lord’s side? Who?  
 (“Who’s on the Lord’s Side?” *Hymns*,  
no. 260)

Although these are the words of a song we do not sing very often, it has become one of my favorite hymns because of the commitment to truth and right. In fact, it is a question that should be in the mind of each young man and each young woman the world over: “Who’s on the Lord’s side?” And our resounding answer should be, “*I am!*”

### **Examples of Nephi and David**

It was the question that was in the mind of Nephi when the Lord, through Nephi’s father, Lehi, directed Nephi and his brothers to go back to Jerusalem to obtain the brass plates. When Laman and Lemuel murmured, the question came to

Nephi, “Who’s on the Lord’s side?” to which he responded, “*I am!*” in the words, “I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them” (1 Nephi 3:7).

It was the same with young David in the Old Testament. Remember how, as a young shepherd, he visited his brothers on the battlefield. While there he heard the taunts of the giant Philistine, Goliath, to the men of Israel—challenging them to battle. And all Israel’s warriors were afraid to face the giant. Their response to the question “Who’s on the Lord’s side?” was not “*I am!*” but rather “Who me?”

But not the boy David. Taking only stones and a simple shepherd’s sling, he approached the giant, saying: “Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts. . . .

“This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; . . . that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel” (1 Samuel 17:45–46). And at that point David did not timidly walk but *ran* to meet the giant. And because of David’s faith in God, Goliath was slain and Israel prevailed.

My young brethren and sisters, wherever I travel, I meet noble youth just like you who are faced constantly with modern-day Goliaths in the form of temptations that would cause us to violate our covenants and the standards the Lord has given us. This becomes even more important when you are surrounded daily with profanity, socially accepted immorality, immodesty, pornography, and other inappropriate material in the media, including television and the Internet, and widespread availability of drugs and alcohol. In a word, not a day goes by that we are not asked, in one form or another, “Who’s on the Lord’s side? Who?” I have two simple

suggestions to help you prepare your answer to that question.

### **Do not forget who you are**

First, never forget who you are. The simple truth is in the children's hymn many of us learned in Primary: "I am a child of God" (*Hymns*, no. 301). And our wise and kind Heavenly Father has not just sent us here and then left us alone. He has given us specific guides to help us accomplish that which He expects of us. He has given us families to help, to love, and to teach. He has given us living prophets to lead us. He has given us, through the First Presidency, the standards in the *For the Strength of Youth* brochure, with this promise: "We promise that as you keep these standards and live by the truths in the scriptures, you will be able to do your life's work with greater wisdom and skill and bear trials with greater courage. You will have the help of the Holy Ghost" ([2001], 2).

I always keep my small copy of the brochure with me—*always!* I challenge you to do the same. Then, when you are waiting for a bus or have a spare moment, pull it out, read it, and recommit to live the standards in that brochure. I promise you that as you do, happiness, peace, and deep feelings of courage and self-worth will follow.

As you exercise your agency, remember, you are not alone. In addition to a kind and wise Heavenly Father, there are others who are praying for you to make wise choices. As a youth, when I would go out on a date or with my friends, I would always check in with my parents when I came home. Usually I would just knock on their door, open it and say, "I'm home," and then go to bed. One night I came home from a date, knocked as usual, and then opened the door. As I did so, the light from the hall fell on my angel mother on her knees in prayer. And as I saw her there, I knew whom she was praying for. I have never forgotten that experience. And

the knowledge that my mother still prays for me today bears me up and reminds me who I am and that I am not alone.

### **"Let virtue garnish thy thoughts"**

My second suggestion: learn to control your thoughts. A part of the plan of happiness that our Heavenly Father has given us is that we were sent here to be tested. Therefore, there will always be temptations. Our work as Latter-day Saints is to keep the commandments of God, in spite of the temptations that Satan sends our way. In my life, I have found that this is much easier to do when we can control our thoughts—and especially when we have memorized music, scriptures, and good poetry to replace the evil thoughts that come into our minds.

President Boyd K. Packer has counseled us to have a hymn memorized so that when an inappropriate thought comes into our minds, we can replace it with a hymn. In applying this instruction, a friend of mine explained: "One day I left my office for lunch. After I had walked for about two blocks, I noticed that I had been humming 'my song': 'I Am a Child of God.' As I chained my thoughts back several hundred yards, I realized that as I had crossed the street from my office, a young woman, inappropriately clothed, had crossed in front of me. Immediately, subconsciously, the words and music of 'I Am a Child of God' began to roll through my mind—to displace inappropriate thoughts." That day my friend learned a great lesson about his ability to control his thoughts.

President George Albert Smith gave wonderful counsel on this subject when he said: "There is a line of demarcation well defined between the Lord's territory and the devil's territory. If you will remain on the Lord's side of the line, the adversary cannot come there to tempt you. . . . But . . . if you cross onto the devil's side of the line, you are in his territory . . . and he will work on you to get you just as far from

that line as he possibly can, knowing that he can only succeed in destroying you by keeping you away from the place where there is safety” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1945, 118).

The Mutual theme for 2007 provides a promise for those who heed this wise counsel: “Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God . . . [and] the Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion” (D&C 121:45–46).

I testify to you that God lives. I know that we are His children, that He knows us by name, and that we are not alone as we make these important decisions. Each day of your life you will make choices, the result of which will land you either on one side of that line or on the other. And so I issue the challenge to all youth within the sound of my voice, to the youth of the noble birthright throughout the world: live

your life in such a way that when you are faced with a choice between good and evil and when deep inside you can hear the question “Who’s on the Lord’s side?”—you will be prepared to answer with all your strength, “*I am!*” In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

Thank you, brethren. The choir and congregation will now sing “Come, Ye Children of the Lord.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi of the Seventy will address us, and he will be followed by Elders Dieter F. Uchtdorf and Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Come, Ye Children of the Lord.”

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## Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi

### Tithing is holy unto the Lord

I would like to discuss the law of tithing. In the book of Malachi, the Lord asks:

“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

“Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”<sup>1</sup>

Tithing is such an important commandment that when the Lord appeared on the American continent after His Resurrection, He repeated those same exact words.<sup>2</sup> And the Lord said in our day,

“Those who have thus been tithed shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually.”<sup>3</sup>

In the book of Leviticus, the Lord stated three different times that tithing is “holy unto the Lord.”<sup>4</sup>

The Lord said, “Prove me now [or test me now] . . . , if I will not open you the windows of heaven.”<sup>5</sup> Many of us test the Lord in the right way; however, some do not.

Consider, for example, ten apples. Now, all ten of these apples actually belong to the Lord, but He asks us to return to Him only one-tenth, or one apple.

Are you offering only a small bite of that apple and keeping 90 percent? Are you willing to offer the Lord such a small portion?

Are you ashamed, or do you try to patch up and hide the bitten portion of the apple and then offer that to the Lord?

We want our offerings to be full and clean. We have been taught: “Behold, the

Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Experience of a stake in Idaho**

A few years ago I received the assignment to reorganize the Carey Idaho Stake. The plane landed at Twin Falls, and President Roy Hubert, who had served so well, met me there and drove me to his home. While we were driving, I asked him, “Is there anything I can do for you and your Saints?”

He said: “Oh, we have had a terrible drought for the last few years. This year it is particularly severe, and many farmers have left town to find employment elsewhere.”

I was so disturbed for our faithful members who love the Lord and the Church yet were losing their farms.

A young bishop, R. Spence Ellsworth, was called to serve as the new stake president. During the Sunday general session, results of the drought weighed heavily on my mind. As I was speaking, a strong prompting came. I asked them to do the following:

1. Faithfully pay an honest tithe, both young and old.
2. Humbly hold regular individual and family prayers.
3. Devotedly have daily personal and family scripture study.
4. Thankfully keep the Sabbath day holy.
5. Gratefully go to the temple often, there offering thanksgiving.
6. Willingly sustain and follow the new leaders.
7. Hold a stakewide fast, including everyone in the affected communities who would like to participate.

For the next couple of days following the stake conference, many members planted their crops with complete faith, even though there was no forecast of rain.

On Wednesday, under the direction of President Ellsworth, the whole stake fasted. That same week many members, the leaders, and their spouses went to the Boise Idaho Temple and offered their thanksgiving. While these faithful Saints were in the temple, rain began to fall on the entire community, though the weather forecast indicated no moisture for the next few weeks. The following Saturday, good rain fell again and continued for a few days. This happened late in the month of April. Significant snow fell in the mountains, providing enough moisture. In the Dietrich and Richfield communities, their reservoir had been under 30 percent, but after the people fasted, the reservoir was nearly full. The Carey water supply increased from about 44 percent to more than 100 percent of normal. Through the rest of the growing season, as members of the Carey stake increased their faith by fasting a few more times, paying honest tithes, and attending the temple more frequently, the Lord heard and answered their prayers. Frost came late that year, so the farmers were able to harvest grain, sugar beets, alfalfa, potatoes, and other crops. From that day, and each year since, they have offered their thanksgiving prayers, and “because of . . . his tender mercies,”<sup>7</sup> the Lord continues to bless them.

In the book of Chronicles, the Lord said, “If my people, . . . called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”<sup>8</sup>

### **A matter of faith**

Paying a full and honest tithe leads us to the temple. Tithing, I believe, is one of President Hinckley’s prophetic priorities.

Last week in the Young Women meeting, President Hinckley said, “While tithing is paid with money, more importantly it is paid with faith.”<sup>9</sup>

Another time he said: “This is not so much a matter of money as it is a matter of faith. . . . I urge you, . . . every one of you, to take the Lord at His word in this important matter.”<sup>10</sup>

It is a matter of commitment. The earth belongs to the Lord, and this includes our own lives. He allows us to use *everything* on this earth. He only asks us to return one-tenth. Tithing is a token of gratitude, obedience, and thanksgiving—a token of our willingness and dedication. Paying tithing, willingly, develops an honest and pure heart. Paying tithing increases our love for the Lord.

The Lord said, “It is a day of sacrifice, and a day for the tithing of my people.”<sup>11</sup>

Brothers and sisters, let us demonstrate our faith. Let us show our willingness to obey. I promise you, in the name of Jesus Christ, when you and I pay honest, true tithes to the Lord, the Lord will open the windows of heaven.

I know that Heavenly Father lives. Therefore, He will bless you. Jesus Christ is our Savior. Joseph saw Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. This is His Church. President Gordon B. Hinckley is a living oracle of God. He asks you to come often to the temple. This is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Malachi 3:8–10.
2. See 3 Nephi 24:8–10.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 119:4.
4. Leviticus 27:30; see also vv. 32–33.
5. 3 Nephi 24:10.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 64:34.
7. Ether 6:12.
8. 2 Chronicles 7:14.
9. “Let Virtue Garnish Thy Thoughts Unceasingly,” *Ensign*, May 2007, 117.
10. In Conference Report, Oct. 1985, 110; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 85.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 64:23.

## Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf

### Point of no return

During my training to become an airline captain, I had to learn how to navigate an airplane over long distances. Flights over huge oceans, crossing extensive deserts, and connecting continents need careful planning to ensure a safe arrival at the planned destination. Some of these nonstop flights can last up to 14 hours and cover almost 9,000 miles.

There is an important decision point during such long flights commonly known as the *point of safe return*. Up to this point the aircraft has enough fuel to turn around and return safely to the airport of departure. Having passed the point of safe return, the captain has lost this option and has to continue on. That is why this point is often referred to as the *point of no return*.

*Are there points of no return in our lives?* Satan, “the father of all lies” (2 Nephi 2:18), “the father of contention” (3 Nephi 11:29), “the author of all sin” (Helaman 6:30), and the “enemy unto God” (Moroni 7:12), uses the forces of evil to convince us that this concept applies whenever we have sinned. The scriptures call him the “accuser” because he wants us to feel that we are beyond forgiveness (see Revelation 12:10). Satan wants us to think that when we have sinned we have gone past a “point of no return”—that it is too late to change our course. In our beautiful but also troubled world, it is a sad reality that this attitude is the source of great sorrow, grief, and distress to families, marriages, and individual lives.

Satan tries to counterfeit the work of God, and by doing this he may deceive many. To make us lose hope, feel miserable like himself, and believe that we are

beyond forgiveness, Satan might even misuse words from the scriptures that emphasize the justice of God, in order to imply that there is no mercy.

### The plan for our safe return

*What is the Lord's plan for our safe return?* Protection against the influence of the devil comes through the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the good news that Jesus Christ has made a perfect Atonement for mankind. It is the message of love, hope, and mercy that there is a reconciliation of man with God.

Sin is the willful transgression of divine law. The Atonement of Jesus Christ is the gift of God to His children to correct and overcome the consequences of sin. God loves all of His children, and He will never cease to love and to hope for us. The plan of our Heavenly Father is clear, and His promises are great: "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world . . . might be saved" (John 3:17).

Christ came to save us. If we have taken a wrong course, the Atonement of Jesus Christ can give us the assurance that sin is *not* a point of no return. A safe return is possible if we will follow God's plan for our salvation.

We have received this plan from the highest authority in the universe, even God, our Heavenly Father. This plan was prepared before the foundation of the earth. It is a great plan of happiness, a plan of mercy, a plan of redemption, a plan of salvation. This plan enables us to experience a physical existence, including mortality, a time of probation, and to return to the presence of God and live in eternal happiness and glory. It is explained in the doctrines of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Following this plan has beautiful eternal consequences for us individually, for our families, for generations to come, and even for generations who went before.

The plan includes divine reconciliation and forgiveness.

### Repentance and forgiveness

*How is divine forgiveness possible?* We acknowledge that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), but we also declare with firmness that repentance and forgiveness can be as real as sin.

The Atonement of Jesus Christ causes each person to be accountable for his or her individual sins. We will overcome the consequences of individual sin by claiming the blessings and benefits of the Atonement.

President David O. McKay said, "Every principle and ordinance of the gospel of Jesus Christ is significant and important . . . , but there is none more essential to the salvation of the human family than the divine and eternally operative principle [of] repentance" (*Gospel Ideals* [1953], 13).

"For salvation cometh to none . . . except it be through repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Mosiah 3:12).

It is not repentance per se that saves man. It is the blood of Jesus Christ that saves us. It is not by our sincere and honest change of behavior alone that we are saved, but "by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:23). True repentance, however, is the condition required so that God's forgiveness can come into our lives. True repentance makes "a brilliant day [out] of the darkest night" (Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* [1969], 362).

*What does true repentance consist of?* We need a strong faith in Christ to be able to repent. Our faith has to include a "correct idea of [God's] character, perfections, and attributes" (*Lectures on Faith* [1985], 38; italics in original). If we believe that God knows all things, is loving, and is merciful, we will be able to put our trust in Him for our salvation without wavering. Faith in Christ will change our thoughts,



beliefs, and behaviors that are not in harmony with God's will.

True repentance brings us back to doing what is right. To truly repent we must recognize our sins and feel remorse, or godly sorrow, and confess those sins to God. If our sins are serious, we must also confess them to our authorized priesthood leader. We need to ask God for forgiveness and do all we can to correct whatever harm our actions may have caused. Repentance means a change of mind and heart—we stop doing things that are wrong, and we start doing things that are right. It brings us a fresh attitude toward God, oneself, and life in general.

### Fruits of forgiveness

*What are the fruits of forgiveness?* True repentance blesses our lives with the effects of the Atonement: we feel God's forgiveness and His peace, and our guilt and sorrow are lifted away; we enjoy the influence of the Spirit in greater abundance; and we are better prepared to live with our Heavenly Father.

President Spencer W. Kimball taught: "The essence of the miracle of forgiveness is that it brings peace to the previously anxious, restless, frustrated, perhaps tormented soul. . . . God will wipe away . . . the tears of anguish, and remorse, . . . and fear, and guilt" (*The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 363, 368).

Jesus promised, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. . . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

The prophet Alma, who was reclaimed from sin to happiness by God's forgiveness, declared, "Wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10). He had witnessed the bitter pains of sin, but he also spoke with excitement about the happiness that accompanies true repentance and forgiveness: "Yea, I say unto you, . . . there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy" (Alma 36:21). Alma concluded with

powerful and wise counsel to all who seek forgiveness: "And now, . . . I desire that ye should let these things trouble you no more, and only let your sins trouble you, with that trouble which shall bring you down unto repentance" (Alma 42:29).

### How to know we are forgiven

*How can we know that God has forgiven us?* President Harold B. Lee said, "When you have done all within your power to overcome your mistakes, and have determined in your heart that you will never repeat them again, then . . . peace of conscience [can come to you] by which you will know that your sins have been forgiven" (in "Law of Chastity Vital, Girls Told," *Church News*, Sept. 2, 1972, 7).

Once we have truly repented, Christ will take away the burden of guilt for our sins. We can know for ourselves that we have been forgiven and made clean. The Holy Ghost will verify this to us; He is the Sanctifier. No other testimony of forgiveness can be greater.

The Lord said, "He that repents and *does the commandments* of the Lord shall be forgiven" (D&C 1:32; italics added). And He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). "Be faithful and diligent . . . , and I will encircle thee in the arms of my love" (D&C 6:20).

And He declared, "Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more" (D&C 58:42).

Satan will try to make us believe that our sins are not forgiven because *we* can remember them. Satan is a liar; he tries to blur our vision and lead us away from the path of repentance and forgiveness. God did not promise that *we* would not remember our sins. Remembering will help us avoid making the same mistakes again. But if we stay true and faithful, the memory of our sins will be softened over time. This will be part of the needed healing and

sanctification process. Alma testified that after he cried out to Jesus for mercy, he could still remember his sins, but the memory of his sins no longer distressed and tortured him, because he knew he had been forgiven (see Alma 36:17–19).

It is our responsibility to avoid anything that would bring back old sinful memories. When we continue to have a “broken heart and a contrite spirit” (3 Nephi 12:19), we may trust that God will “remember [our sins] no more.”

### Extending forgiveness to others

*How does extending forgiveness help us to receive God’s forgiveness?* Jesus taught us eternal truth when He taught us to pray: “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. . . . For, if ye forgive men their trespasses your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not . . . neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (3 Nephi 13:11, 14–15).

Therefore, extending forgiveness is a precondition to receiving forgiveness.

For our own good, we need the moral courage to forgive and to ask for forgiveness. Never is the soul nobler and more courageous than when we forgive. This includes forgiving ourselves.

Each of us is under a divinely spoken obligation to reach out with pardon and mercy and to forgive one another. There is a great need for this Christlike attribute in our families, in our marriages, in our wards and stakes, in our communities, and in our nations.

We will receive the joy of forgiveness in our own lives when we are willing to extend that joy freely to others. Lip service is not enough. We need to purge our hearts and minds of feelings and thoughts of bitterness and let the light and the love of Christ enter in. As a result, the Spirit of the Lord will fill our souls with the joy accompanying divine peace of conscience (see Mosiah 4:2–3).

### Always a point of safe return

My dear brothers and sisters, my dear young friends, when the captain of a long-range jet passes the point of safe return, and the headwinds are too strong or the cruising altitudes too low, he might be forced to divert to an airport other than his planned destination. This is not so in our journey through life back to our heavenly home. Wherever you find yourselves on this journey through life, whatever trials you may face, there is *always* a point of safe return; there is always hope. You are the captain of your life, and God has prepared a plan to bring you safely back to Him, to your divine destination.

The gift of the Atonement of Jesus Christ provides us at all times and at all places with the blessings of repentance and forgiveness. Because of this gift, the opportunity to make a safe return from the disastrous course of sin is available to all of us.

For this I give thanks to our Heavenly Father, and of this I bear testimony with all my heart and soul in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Russell M. Nelson

### The doctrine of repentance

Last year while Elder David S. Baxter and I were driving to a stake conference, we stopped at a restaurant. Later when returning to our car, we were approached by a woman who called out to us. We were

startled by her appearance. Her grooming (or lack of it) was what I might politely call “extreme.” She asked if we were elders in the Church. We said yes. Almost unrestrained, she told the story of her tragic life, swamped in sin. Now, only 28 years old, she was miserable. She felt

worthless, with nothing to live for. As she spoke, the sweetness of her soul began to emerge. Pleading tearfully, she asked if there was any hope for her, any way up and out of her hopelessness.

“Yes,” we responded, “there is hope. Hope is linked to repentance. You can change. You can ‘come unto Christ, and be perfected in him.’”<sup>1</sup> We urged her not to procrastinate.<sup>2</sup> She sobbed humbly and thanked us sincerely.

As Elder Baxter and I continued our journey, we pondered that experience. We recalled the counsel given to a hopeless soul by Aaron, who said, “If thou wilt repent of all thy sins, and will bow down before God, and call on his name in faith, . . . then shalt thou receive the hope which thou desirest.”<sup>3</sup>

Now, at this closing session of general conference, I too speak on repentance. I do so because the Lord has commanded His servants to cry repentance unto all people.<sup>4</sup> The Master has restored His gospel to bring joy to His children, and repentance is a crucial component of that gospel.<sup>5</sup>

The doctrine of repentance is as old as the gospel itself. Biblical teachings from the books of Genesis<sup>6</sup> to Revelation<sup>7</sup> teach repentance. Lessons from Jesus Christ during His mortal ministry include these warnings: “The kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel”<sup>8</sup> and “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”<sup>9</sup>

References to repentance are even more frequent in the Book of Mormon.<sup>10</sup> To the people of ancient America, the Lord gave this commandment: “Again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.”<sup>11</sup>

With the Restoration of the gospel, our Savior has again stressed this doctrine. The word *repent* in any of its forms appears in 47 of the 138 sections of the Doctrine and Covenants!<sup>12</sup>

## Repent from sin

What does it mean to repent? We begin with a dictionary’s definition that to repent is “to turn from sin . . . to feel sorrow [and] regret.”<sup>13</sup> To repent from sin is not easy. But the prize is worth the price. Repentance needs to be done one step at a time. Humble prayer will facilitate each essential step. As prerequisites to forgiveness, there must first be recognition, remorse, then confession.<sup>14</sup> “By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them.”<sup>15</sup> Confession is to be made to the person who has been wronged. Confession should be sincere and not merely an admission of guilt after proof is evident. If many persons have been offended, confession should be made to all offended parties. Acts that may affect one’s standing in the Church or the right to its privileges should be confessed promptly to the bishop, whom the Lord has called as a common judge in Israel.<sup>16</sup>

The next step is restitution—to repair damage done—if possible. Then come steps to resolve to do better and refrain from relapse—to repent “with full purpose of heart.”<sup>17</sup> Thanks to the ransom paid by the Atonement of Jesus Christ, full forgiveness is given to the sinner who repents and remains free from sin.<sup>18</sup> To the repentant soul, Isaiah said, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”<sup>19</sup>

The Lord’s imperative emphasis on repentance is evident as we read from section 19 of the Doctrine and Covenants: “I command you to repent—repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not.

“For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

“But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I.”<sup>20</sup>

While the Lord insists on our repentance, most people don’t feel such a compelling need.<sup>21</sup> They include themselves among those who try to be good. They have no evil intent.<sup>22</sup> Yet the Lord is clear in His message that *all* need to repent—not only from sins of *commission* but from sins of *omission* as well. Such is the case in His warning to parents: “Inasmuch as parents have children in Zion . . . that teach them *not* to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost . . . , the sin be upon the heads of the parents.”<sup>23</sup>

### Broader meaning of the word *repent*

The doctrine of repentance is much broader than a dictionary’s definition. When Jesus said “repent,” His disciples recorded that command in the Greek language with the verb *metanoeo*.<sup>24</sup> This powerful word has great significance. In this word, the prefix *meta* means “change.”<sup>25</sup> The suffix relates to four important Greek terms: *nous*, meaning “the mind”;<sup>26</sup> *gnosis*, meaning “knowledge”;<sup>27</sup> *pneuma*, meaning “spirit”;<sup>28</sup> and *phoe*, meaning “breath.”<sup>29</sup>

Thus, when Jesus said “repent,” He asked us to change—to change our mind, knowledge, and spirit—even our breath. A prophet explained that such a change in one’s breath is to breathe with grateful acknowledgment of Him who grants each breath. King Benjamin said, “If ye should serve him who has created you . . . and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath . . . from one moment to another—I say, if ye should serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants.”<sup>30</sup>

Yes, the Lord has commanded us to repent, to change our ways, to come unto Him, and be more like Him.<sup>31</sup> This requires a total change. Alma so taught his son: “Learn wisdom in thy youth,” he said. “Learn in thy youth to keep the command-

ments of God. . . . Let all thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord forever.”<sup>32</sup>

To repent fully is to convert completely to the Lord Jesus Christ and His holy work. Alma taught that concept when he posed these questions: “I ask of you, my brethren of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?”<sup>33</sup> That change comes when we are “born again,” converted and focused upon our journey to the kingdom of God.<sup>34</sup>

### Fruits of repentance

The fruits of repentance are sweet. Repentant converts find that the truths of the restored gospel govern their thoughts and deeds, shape their habits, and forge their character. They are more resilient and able to deny themselves of all ungodliness.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, uncontrolled appetite,<sup>36</sup> addiction to pornography or harmful drugs,<sup>37</sup> unbridled passion,<sup>38</sup> carnal desire,<sup>39</sup> and unrighteous pride<sup>40</sup> are diminished with complete conversion to the Lord and a determination to serve Him and to emulate His example.<sup>41</sup> Virtue garnishes their thoughts, and self-confidence grows.<sup>42</sup> Tithing is seen as a joyful and protective blessing, not as a duty or a sacrifice.<sup>43</sup> Truth becomes more attractive, and things praiseworthy become more engaging.<sup>44</sup>

Repentance is the Lord’s regimen for spiritual growth. King Benjamin explained that “the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child

doth submit to his father.”<sup>45</sup> Brothers and sisters, that means conversion! Repentance is conversion! A repentant soul is a converted soul, and a converted soul is a repentant soul.

### Repentance for those who are dead

Each living person can repent. But what about those who have died? They also have opportunities to repent. Scripture declares that “the faithful elders of this dispensation, when they depart from mortal life, continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel of repentance . . . among those who are . . . under the bondage of sin in the great world of the spirits of the dead.

“The dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God,

“And after they have paid the penalty of their transgressions, and are washed clean, [they] shall receive a reward according to their works.”<sup>46</sup>

The Prophet Joseph Smith further revealed that “the earth will be smitten with a curse unless there is a welding link of some kind or other between the fathers and the children. . . . We without [our dead] cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect. . . . [This] dispensation is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place.”<sup>47</sup>

“Jesus wants me for a sunbeam”?<sup>48</sup> Yes! And you too! He also wants us as bonding blacksmiths—creating celestial welding links—to curb the curse<sup>49</sup> of family fragmentation. The earth was created and temples provided so that families can be together forever.<sup>50</sup> Many, if not most, of us could repent and be converted to more temple and family history work for our ancestors. Thus, our repentance is necessary and essential for their repentance.

For all our kindred dead, to the 28-year-old woman mired in the swamp of

sin, and to each one of us, I declare that the sweet blessing of repentance is possible. It comes through complete conversion to the Lord and His holy work.

I know that God lives. Jesus is the Christ. This is His Church. His prophet today is President Gordon B. Hinckley. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Moroni 10:32.
2. See Alma 13:27; 34:33. President Spencer W. Kimball described procrastination as “an unwillingness to accept personal responsibilities now” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* [2006], 4).
3. Alma 22:16. We also remember the sinful people under the care of their concerned leader, Mormon, who wrote, “I was without hope, for I knew the judgments of the Lord which should come upon them; for they repented not of their iniquities, but did struggle for their lives without calling upon that Being who created them” (Mormon 5:2).
4. Especially in these latter days; see Doctrine and Covenants 18:11–12, 14; 19:21; 34:5–6; 43:20; 133:16–17.
5. “The first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Articles of Faith 1:4). See also Doctrine and Covenants 39:6; 84:27; 138:19.
6. See Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 4:8.
7. See Revelation 2:16.
8. Mark 1:15; see also Matthew 4:17.
9. Luke 13:3.
10. The word *repent* (to teach the doctrine of repentance) in any of its forms (*repent*, *repentance*, *repented*, *repenteth*, and so on) appears 72 times in the King James Version of the Bible and 68 times in the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. In the Book of Mormon, the word *repent* in any of its forms appears 360 times.

11. 3 Nephi 11:38. Another example is “I have given you the law and the commandments of my Father, that ye shall believe in me, and that ye shall repent of your sins, and come unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (3 Nephi 12:19).
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 1; 3; 5–6; 10–11; 13–16; 18–20; 29; 33–36; 39; 42–45; 49–50; 53–56; 58; 63–64; 66; 68; 75; 84; 90; 93; 98; 104; 107; 109; 117; 124; 133; 136; 138.
13. *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (1987), “repent,” 999.
14. See 1 John 1:9; Mosiah 26:29; Doctrine and Covenants 61:2; 64:7.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 58:43. If no other person has been offended, confession should be prayerfully offered to God. He who hears in secret may reward openly (see Matthew 6:4, 6, 18; 3 Nephi 13:4, 6, 18).
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:73–74.
17. 2 Nephi 31:13; Jacob 6:5; Mosiah 7:33; 3 Nephi 10:6; 12:24; 18:32.
18. See Mosiah 4:2–3.
19. Isaiah 1:18.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 19:15–17.
21. In the minds of some people, the word *repent* also conjures up terms like *penalty* and *penalize*, which connote punishment. If they are not guilty of punishable sin, they may reason that they have no need to repent.
22. President Spencer W. Kimball said: “There is a prevalent, perhaps subconscious, feeling that the Lord designed repentance only for those who commit murder or adultery or theft or other heinous crimes. This is of course not so. If we are humble and desirous of living the gospel we will come to think of repentance as applying to everything we do in life, whether it be spiritual or temporal in nature. Repentance is for every soul who has not yet reached perfection” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball*, 37). See also 1 John 1:8; Mosiah 4:29–30.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 68:25; italics added.
24. *Metanoëo*, μετανοέω, was used in the Greek text of the Lord’s statements in Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15; and Luke 13:3. The same term was used by Peter in Acts 2:38; 3:19; and 8:22.
25. In Matthew 17:2 and Mark 9:2, *transfigured* was translated from *metamorphoo*, meaning “change of form.”
26. In Ephesians 4:23, *mind* was translated from the Greek *nous*.
27. In Luke 1:77; Romans 2:20; and 2 Corinthians 6:6, *knowledge* was translated from *gnos* or *gnosis*. *Gnos*, when preceded by the negative indicator *a-*, means “lack of knowledge,” as in *agnostic*. In Acts 17:23, *unknown* was translated from *agnostos*, and *ignorantly* was translated from *agnoeo*.
28. In Matthew 12:18 and Romans 8:5, *spirit* was translated from the Greek *pneuma*.
29. In Acts 17:25, *breath* was translated from the Greek *pnoe*.
30. Mosiah 2:21.
31. See 3 Nephi 27:21, 27.
32. Alma 37:35–36.
33. Alma 5:14.
34. See John 3:3, 7; Mosiah 27:25; Alma 5:49; 7:14; Moses 6:59.
35. See Moroni 10:32.
36. See Galatians 6:7–8.
37. See Judges 13:7; Luke 1:15; Doctrine and Covenants 89:5, 7–9.
38. See Matthew 5:27–28; Alma 38:12; 3 Nephi 12:27–28; Doctrine and Covenants 42:23.
39. See Romans 8:5–6.
40. See Alma 38:11; Doctrine and Covenants 121:37.
41. See John 13:15; 1 Timothy 4:12; 1 Peter 2:21; 2 Nephi 31:16; 3 Nephi 18:16; Mormon 7:10.
42. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.
43. See Doctrine and Covenants 85:3.
44. See Philippians 4:8; Articles of Faith 1:13.
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46. Doctrine and Covenants 138:57–59; see also vv. 30–34.
47. Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.
48. *Children’s Songbook*, 60.
49. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:9; 110:14–15; 128:18; 138:48.
50. See Doctrine and Covenants 2:2–3; 132:19; 138:47–48; Joseph Smith—History 1:39.

## President Monson

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir and the priesthood choir from Brigham Young University and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music they have provided. We also extend thanks to all who participated in any way in these proceedings.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker at this session of the conference. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "I Need Thee Every Hour." The benediction will then be offered by Elder D. Rex Gerratt of the Seventy, and this conference will be adjourned for six months.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### A wonderful conference

My beloved brethren and sisters, we have enjoyed a wonderful conference. We have rededicated the Salt Lake Tabernacle, as we put it back to use after extensive renovation. We have filled this Conference Center to capacity for every session. Our words have gone across the world to members of the Church scattered far and wide.

Now we will return to our homes. We urge you who will be driving to do so carefully. Let no accident destroy the spirit of this wonderful occasion.

We hope that you will use the May edition of the Church magazines as a text for your family home evenings to review that which has been spoken in this conference. What has been said by each of the speakers represents his or her prayerful attempt to impart knowledge that will

inspire and cause all who have heard it to stand a little taller and be a little better.

May there be peace and harmony in your homes. Husbands, love and treasure your wives. They are your most precious possessions. Wives, encourage and pray for your husbands. They need all the help they can get. Parents, treat your children with great kindness. They are the coming generation who will bring honor to your name.

Now, as we separate for a season, God bless you, my beloved associates. I so pray, as I say good-bye, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "I Need Thee Every Hour."

Elder D. Rex Gerratt offered the benediction.

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## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for the Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir. John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

A priesthood choir from Brigham Young University provided music for the priesthood session. Ronald Staheli di-

rected the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, and Bonnie Goodliffe.

**F. Michael Watson**

Clerk of the Conference

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